

TRANSCRIPT

Early Implementers: Strategies, Lessons, Assets, Challenges

PANEL Jennifer O'Day
Lynn Dougherty-Underwood
Susan Cordova
Sandy Thorstenson
Chris Steinhauser

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JENNIFER O'DAY My name is Jennifer O'Day. I am one of the planners for this session. I chair the California Collaborative on District Reform, and I am from the American Institutes for Research. And we are really excited about this sort of next section of the agenda today because we are moving from what I think was a fascinating discussion about the kinds of shifts that are necessary in instruction to achieve the Common Core State Standards. We are now moving into, "Okay, so we know that we have to make these big shifts; how are we going to do that?" "And this session is very much about implementation towards achieving the Common Core State Standards.

And what we wanted to do was to bring together a group of districts that have been engaged in this work for some time. We are calling them "early implementers," but they are engaged in the same work that all of you are engaged in. And we have a range of folks with us. We wanted to actually have a couple of people from outside California. A lot of districts ask, "Well, what's going on in the rest of the country?" And so we have Lynn Dougherty-Underwood, who is the director of K-12 literacy in Hillsborough County, which is in Florida, for those of you who don't know. And this is a very large district of, what, about 193,000 kids, something like that? Yes, 195,000 kids. So we are going from a very large district. And then Susana Cordova, who is the chief academic officer in Denver, Colorado. And both Hillsborough and Denver have been actively working with a set of districts across the country to do this work to implement the Common Core State Standards. And then we are going to our smallest district here; Sandy Thorstenson, who is from the Whittier Union High School District here in California, obviously, in Southern California. And she will talk a little bit about what it's like to be in a high school district doing this work and in a smaller district than certainly the other ones on the panel. And then Chris Steinhauser, who is the superintendent in Long Beach Unified.

And I've asked each of the panelists to speak for about five to seven minutes just to outline some key aspects of their strategies. Now we were told this morning that the local action is really key in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, and systemic efforts are going to be really important. So that's what we are really going to focus in on during this panel is what do our systems have to do to be successful in implementing these standards and making the kinds of shifts that we have been talking about.

So each of them will talk for about five to seven minutes about some different aspects. We wanted to put a variety of issues out on the table, some different aspects of their implementation efforts. And then we are going to have an interactive discussion. I have got a whole list of questions to pose to you guys, and we want to—there are questions that were raised in the profiles and the conversations you had before this session, what we have been hearing today and what we have heard from districts around the state and around the country. And then we will also save some time for questions from you all. And this will go on for about an hour and a half, and then we will move into learning more about what's happening at the state level to support your systemic local efforts to implement these standards. So I am going to stop there, and Lynn is going to talk a little bit about what you have been doing in Hillsborough.

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD Thank you. Good afternoon. Greetings from Tampa, Florida. I am pleased to be with you this afternoon and talk a little bit about two of the component parts that we spent a quite a bit of time on. The first one is messaging and how in a district that's the eighth largest in the nation with, as Jennifer said, a great many teachers, administrators and students, to deliver a concise and clear message across our constituents, our stakeholders. Typically, in our district, we have multiple large initiatives, and we work hard to connect those for our stakeholders so that they understand that the process of looking at Common Core, looking at teacher evaluation through our Empowering Effective Teachers grant, looking at our Wallace grant, which is our Hillsborough principal pipeline, and all of our curriculum instruction pieces are very closely aligned and will take us to that goal that we are looking forward, which is high student achievement.

So we started our process talking about how to launch Common Core about a year and a half, two years ago, and we were partnered at that time with the Dana Center and the Aspen Institute, and they came to the district in April 2011 with a stakeholder group of about 50. We had district site-based administrators, superintendent staff. We had the teacher union representation and the Florida DOE there as well to work through the levers that you actually have in your packet in a two-day meeting. So we spent the first day as a group with very different perspectives about what was happening in our district instructionally, talking about our strengths, talking about our challenge areas, and trying to get a very solid status check.

When we started into the day, we felt like we had a fairly good handle on how we wanted to approach the messaging of Common Core. At the end of the day, we had totally shifted our thinking. So then the next day we came back together and we talked about the idea of creating a common message that would be delivered to all of our stakeholders throughout the coming school year. So last year we worked very hard to lay a deep foundation of understanding of what Common Core really is, what it meant, what the compelling whys were behind Common Core and then to look at the actual documents for ELA and mathematics at a deeper level. Because we felt very strongly that without that very core understanding of why we were doing this and how it was connecting to instruction, that it would become just another project that we pushed out and our teachers would deliver the instruction without a real true understanding of the necessary shifts that are needed in their work.

So we used our Empowering Effective Teacher rollout, which was then a year and a half underway and our teachers were very aware of the messaging from the Empowering Effective Teacher, which is our teacher evaluation work. Our teachers are in their third year of that evaluation process now and their actual pay will be calculated on the outcome of the student achievement, their evaluation scores from their principals, and their peer and/or mentors this coming year. So it's very high stakes that our instruction is on target so that we are delivering what we need to in our assessments.

We use the EET method of rollout, which was to begin with Mrs. Elia, who is our superintendent, spoke personally to all of the groups in town halls, in our community, in our schools through our closed circuit kind of process and continue that monthly update with all of our stakeholders personally. We decided we would follow that same process with Common Core. So the assistant superintendent, Wynne Tye, and I did the initial training or the professional development for all of our administrators, our school board, and a variety of other stakeholder groups. So that took place during the first half of this last year. It was very intense but we were very committed to making sure that the message was consistently delivered across all of the decision makers at the administrative level, definitely through our school board as well.

Our partnership with the Dana Center and the Aspen Institute also allowed us last summer to bring in a group of about 300 administrators and to begin that process of deeply analyzing the standards. So they got a very clear understanding from the beginning of what the shifts were in ELA and math and what our expectations would be as we move forward in correlating our instruction to the Common Core Standards. We created a task force at that point. It was the beginning of last school year. And that task force kind of created the launch training for all of our teachers. We have about 10,000 teachers that are involved in elementary and about that many at the high school and middle school as well. So we have this huge capacity issue. We use

teacher training as a process, or Train the Trainer as a process of reaching those teachers. So our lead teachers were all a part of Train the Trainer process to take back those compelling why messages to the schools along with that deep look at the actual standards documents. So our beginning motto was “Go slow to go fast” because we felt so strongly that they had to have a very clear and deep understanding of why we were doing this and what the tools were in terms of the actual documents.

We also engaged our community members through the PTA. Our PTA had a Gates-funded grant that they were developing national awareness documents for Common Core, which are on their website. So they were a great partner for us. We also worked with our other stakeholders through the process of our ed foundation, our educational foundation. And we had a PR group that also worked with our Empowering Effective Teacher launch, who is working now to connect to the Empowering Effective Teacher, the Common Core State Standards, and our principle pipeline, which is a Wallace grant initiative, in a web kind of process that can be accessed by the outside.

Finally, our content teachers I skipped over; they have been very busy. Our social studies and science in the content literacy took that initial orientation or the compelling why, they adapted it for their specific content areas and that they would be the content supervisors and the lead teachers. They launched that training this past summer and will continue to work through this school year with that as well. So the instructional shift is happening through our content folks; the messaging piece is working through our assistant superintendents and through our district staff to make sure that our site administrators are well versed. We work monthly with our site administrators during their meetings to deliver the trainings that they need to go back and lead that and to provide that information to their communities at those school sites.

JENNIFER O'DAY Great, thanks. Susana?

SUSANA CORDOVA Great. Well, thanks. I am Susana Cordova from Denver, Colorado, and much of what I have to say is going to sound similar in some ways to Lynn. But rather than repeating some of those things, I will share some of the lessons that we have learned and where we are in our implementation. So Denver is also considered an early implementer site with the Common Core. We started—we're going into our third year with an intense focus on the transition to the Common Core. We started out two years ago really focused on what does it take to be college and career ready. And one of the things that many people may not realize about Denver is we have about 80,000 students; 40% of our kids are from homes where English is not the first language.

And so with a population like that, whenever we look at our student achievement results, we really do look at the role that language plays in

supporting students to either attain outcomes or potentially as something that is keeping them back from getting the outcomes that we want for them. So when we started looking at what it means to be college and career ready, we really started the conversation through a focus on how do we develop academic language for all kids but particularly for students who are learning English as their second language. And so that was the first year. In the second year of our implementation, we really worked on the trial use of instructional tasks and interdisciplinary units. And during that same year, we were also rolling out an educator effectiveness framework within our district really focusing on how do we grow our teachers. And about midway through last year, one of the things that we recognized was that people were really seeing these bodies of work as discrete and separate. And we knew that it would never make sense to talk about them as separate issues. And so I was really excited when Phil earlier today was talking about you can go deeper either by deleting things or by getting greater coherence.

And so part of what we have really tried to focus on this year is deeper coherence across our efforts. And so we really talk about having three major academic priorities. One of them is to grow our educators, and that really is the work around our teacher frameworks and our effective educator work. The second is to improve the outcomes of our English learners and our linguistically diverse students. And the third one is to shift our instructional practices, and that we see these as essential parts of the instructional core. If you shift your instructional practices, you have to look at how you work with your student population differently and how you expect your students to behave differently. If your student population shifts or is different from how you have expected it, you need to be thinking about your development opportunities for teachers differently. And that each one of these things has to fit together, very, very interconnected; it can't be separate.

And so we really looked at our instructional shifts and started looking at our tasks and our units and making sure that we had exemplar content language objectives for all kids within those units so that we weren't talking just about content but we were also taking about language. And we really looked at our frameworks so that when people are going in to observe teachers, they are not just looking at what does it mean to be a generic effective teacher, but what does it mean to be an effective teacher of a content with a linguistically diverse population, so very explicitly calling out the kind of moves that you need to make with descriptors of what that looks like in the classroom with diverse populations. So we felt like that's been really important.

We have added this year also a framework for our school leaders. So it looks at what are the kinds of attributes and characteristics of effective school leaders as well, with real intense focus on what does it mean to support a school with linguistically diverse kids. So that really has been a major part of the work that

we have done. So with those three major areas of focus, we really do feel like we are going to get at some of that coherence to help it feel like these are not overwhelming separate disparate efforts but that they fit together and make sense at the classroom level. So that's a lot of the work that we have done.

JENNIFER O'DAY Great. Sandy?

SANDY THORSTENSON I so appreciate the opportunity to be here and learn everything that we have heard from the very get-go; it's been very, very helpful. I so appreciate the work that both of you are doing. It's interesting to hear what's going on outside of California.

In our part of the world, in the Whittier Union High School District, we have 13,000 kids; they are all teenagers, so we have nothing but fun every day. We work very, very, very closely with the five elementary districts whose students become ours. We consider them our partner districts. We combine—we have the English and math teachers from all the middle schools that feed into our high school district, we have those teachers come to our staff development; we work very closely with them on articulation efforts and I think more closely in a more focused way than most K-12 districts. We just cannot take that for granted. We have 80% of our kids are socioeconomically disadvantaged; 83% of them are Latino and over the years they have become more and more economically disadvantaged.

Over that same time of the demographic shift, every single one of our high schools—we have five comprehensive high schools—have shown remarkable gains in multiple indicators over time. And that's because back in 2004—I have been the superintendent now for 11 years and been in the district for 35. Time flies when you are having way too much fun. In about 2004, we really began a very, very serious focus on developing true professional learning community environment and common assessments were the core and still are the core of our work, all in the effort to really improve instructional practice. So that work has really set a nice foundation for us in a high school district to have a very high level of collaboration. And over the years it's just gotten deeper and deeper. We have had—I am most proud of all the indicators that we assess, I'm most proud of the narrowing of the achievement gap. We had about a 35% gap between our highest and lowest achievers, and now it's about a 7% gap. And that's with the high achievers still achieving at a high level every year. So it's—they are not slowing down; it's just the other kids are growing at a very fast rate. And that's not by chance. We really have very carefully put our more financial resources and more of our best human resources in those areas that showed the greatest need.

We had about 17% of our kids meeting the A-G college entrance requirements; now we just got the newest data, it's over 50% now that are meeting the A-G entrance requirements, and we are really, really thankful for that. And we

have had 99.8% of our kids pass the ELA and the KC and 100% pass it in math. So it's because of the data that we are able to say that demographics do not determine destiny; it's our teachers and the support staff and everybody else growing in the same direction that determines the destiny of the kids. So when anyone says to us how in the world can you do that with the demographics you have, we say, you know what, it's our work; it's our work. The kids depend on us. We have a very high sense of efficacy, knowing that we believe in our ability to be able to improve the lives of our kids. It's something that we believe in very deeply. Our mantra is "Whatever it takes." And we have certainly learned a great deal from the DuFours and from Doug Reeves and from Mike Fullan and many others who have really informed our work.

So with regard to Common Core, we started the work last year and we are thankful for the structures that we have in place. Those structures and systems that really have been deeply embedded since 2004 have helped us with this Common Core work. So part of the structures that we used for our common assessment work prior to Common Core were to have weekly collaboration time on every campus for our staff, so course-alike teams worked at least once a week with each other on the common assessment results and really looking at gaps in kids' learning and looking at best practices and sharing those and talking about raising the level of everyone's instructional practice.

So we have been doing that in weekly collaboration meetings on the campus embedded within the school, the bell schedule. We have had best practices meetings quarterly for subject teams so course-alike teams come to the district office. They share in a very collaborative way on the campuses on a regular basis, but then four times a year they come to the district office and they share in subject-alike teams to really ensure that what they are learning on their campus goes beyond their campus, but also looking at their learning across all districts. So those best practices have been extremely helpful, and then just last summer we started this what we affectionately refer to as the mother of all staff development, having Common Core be the focus for last summer and this summer that we just concluded. So each of the core, each of the subject-alike teams had five days of PD and five days of collaborative implementation time that they were paid, that was paid through Title II PD funds. And then we did that again this summer. So last summer, they developed the constructive responses together and implemented that last year. This year, they were working on performance task development during the summer PD and will take that back and will work on that during the school year. So it is a huge and daunting task, but we know it's the right thing to do for kids and we are embracing that.

JENNIFER O'DAY To hear you talk, I was thinking about John Dewey's miraculous approach. Just get out there and do it. Chris.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER Thank you. It is my honor to be up here with these great people because in Long Beach we steal every great idea that's out there. We do give credit where we take it from, and so I have written down tons of notes. One thing I would like to say for everyone that this is a continuous improvement process. We have shifted. We are very different today than when we started our implementation of Common Core, and I think you have to have an open mind about that because you are going to learn more. And we too have participated in the Aspen Institute and with the Dana Center and with the Council of Great City Schools, and we have a ton of wonderful staff development out there and professional development out there and support, as we heard from David and others today. And so we all have to be open. How do we take it, bring it to our context, and then go from there?

I am very blessed to have wonderful talented people and Chris Dominguez, who is the deputy superintendent, is leading this charge systemwide. Two of her staff members are here, Pamela Seki and Lisa Worsham. They really are doing the heavy lifting. But it's really critical about alignment; everything must be aligned. So this is our work. Our board adopted a strategic plan in 2011 that said all students would be college and career ready when they left Long Beach Unified, and so we have worked basically backwards from there. It's about accountability, so three times a year, and in fact next Monday, we will be giving the board an update on the implementation of Common Core. All departments, all schools in the district must write their goals that are reported up to the board related to Common Core and the implementation. My evaluation is based on the rollout and the success or lack of success to Common Core.

And we do this three times a year in a public setting as well as I do this once a month in a closed session with the Board of Education. Because I have a chart out there at the table that you will see, we have multiple committees. We have a visioning committee that really is the steering committee of the whole process. We have a committee that's on evaluation because we have to fine-tune and incorporate the new instructional shifts into our evaluation process, so we have an ad hoc community for that. We have a K-8 committee that focuses on K-8 implementation, one for high school. As I said, we have our steering committee. We have our assessment steering committee because we have hundreds of local assessments; now how do we treat those as we rollout pilots and modules and so on. We have our technology steering committee because this is critical. I have 84,000 students, 89 schools, not all my schools are up to date with all the technology they need. So we actually took the specs that Smarter Balanced and PARCC gave, we did our own assessment, and we know exactly what schools could take the test tomorrow and which ones couldn't. And you can imagine that the list for who can is pretty short and the list who can't is pretty long. So we actually spent over a million dollars six weeks ago, and all of our middle schools have new labs that are ready to implement the Common Core and we have a plan to go from middle schools to

high schools and then down to elementary schools. So again, it's about strategic alignment, consistent alignment rollout across the district.

We haven't taken the big bold steps, as Hillsborough did, in communication with our parents, and so that's one of our major charges this year. So we have these things called parent councils, teacher councils; we have a lot of meetings. And so this year the theme of all those meetings will be Common Core implementation. At Back to School night, there will be artifacts and hard copy, there will be material on the web, there will be material on our TV station. We will be stealing stuff from Hillsborough and everybody else. Because we feel it's critical that our parents understand, and they are really with us a 100% as long as they are brought along in the process. And then Long Beach is very fortunate to have a community college and a university in its backyard. And we have this thing called the Long Beach College Promise, which basically says that Cal State Long Beach will take any one of our students who meets the minimum standard and I have 1,000 students who are at Long Beach State today. They go in even over kids who have higher GPAs and higher SATs. And then at City College they have what's called the Promise Pathway, and that says that they will guarantee all my students, and there are 1,800 of them there this fall, they have priority registration; they will guarantee them getting out of school in two years.

And so we work backwards on remediation, and we have held several seminars this last year where we brought English teachers together from all institutions, math teachers together and talked about, okay, what is the Common Core? What are the instructional shifts? What is remediation going to look like? What are the assessments we're going to give? And we are fortunate to be able to do that. And so the whole idea is that when our students leave Long Beach, we should remediate in the 12th grade so then they can step right into where they need to be. And I would say anybody can do this in an urban center that has these partners in their backyard. And if you want to come learn what our folks have done, it's amazing. City College did a study, a five-year study, and found that if a student got a C or better in any one of our English classes in the 12th grade, they got C or better in English 1. So they have totally thrown out their assessment system and are now using our grades to place their students. So I mean, this is remarkable, and then we did a pilot with our CSU on using what's called ERWC, and we hope to do a pilot in mathematics.

So there is a lot going on. So for those who are in a situation like Long Beach, you have to involve all partners: your community college partners, your parent partners, your higher ed partners, and most importantly, your teachers and principals. On the principals piece, this year all principals will have five modules that they will roll out, module 1 and 2, trimester 1; module 3 and 4, the second trimester; module 5; which is staff development that they will do with their staffs, there is accountability structures. So again, there is systemic

rollout across the system because that's really important for us, but it doesn't mean we are not going to change what we do. If we find that we need to do something better, we are going to do that. And again, Pam and Lisa are the people who are doing the heavy lifting along with a lot of other people back in Long Beach.

JENNIFER O'DAY Great. Wow, take a breath. You all are up to such great work. I wanted to follow up on a few things, actually have a whole long list of things to follow up on. But let's start with the messaging piece, because I think one of the things that's come through very clearly across all of your districts is the importance that you place on coherence, and clearly that was a theme in the morning as well. It's a theme in the standards and it's a theme for you all in your implementation efforts. But that implies sort of what Lynn was talking about, about people getting consistent messages. And Lynn and Chris, you both talked a little bit about your strategies around that. Susana and Sandy, you haven't sort of mentioned very much about that. What I am wondering is, as you think about the messaging that you have done or that you need to do with your various constituencies, one, what are some of the challenges that you face, what are the questions that people raise, what are the issues that people raise? And two, how do you develop your strategies to address those kinds of things? And start anywhere, just talk amongst yourselves. What are some of the challenges? Let's start with what some of the challenges are in this messaging work, the communication work.

SUSANA CORDOVA Well, I think one of the biggest challenges, and it was in the morning session also, is if people think that this is about crosswalking and aligning the old frameworks to the new frameworks and just kind of shuffling things around, it's just going to produce the same results. And so some of what we really tried to grapple with in messaging is how do we get across this common coherent message around this concept of it really is a new day. And some of the challenges that go along with not trying to frighten people around what the challenge entails but trying to be really clear about it has to be different, otherwise we shouldn't expect the results to be any different.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER And I think Lynn said earlier, it's about going slow to go fast. And one of the things I have heard from teachers is that what happens if the state doesn't have any money to give us the test. You know I said, well, don't worry about that; this is good teaching and we are going to do it. And so how is this aligned to our other initiatives such as Linked Learning? Well, these are all aligned, and so that's what they get. You don't want these random arrows or perceived random arrows. One thing that's been really powerful is when you—and Phil has done it, and he was a presenter in our district—when you present these example problems to parents and to teachers and to board members, and they go, oh my God, this is different, there are major instructional shifts. But I

think it goes back to what you said earlier about keeping people calm, that we are going to do this together and that it's not going to come down upon them.

SANDY THORSTENSON And I think that it's not going to be an effort that's going to be accomplished overnight; it is going to take time. And we have to—I can't remember but I think it was the second presenter who was talking about how important it is to take time, teach the speed of learning, and don't expect things that are really important and that have to be learned at a deep level to be learned at a very, very fast pace. So I think the messaging, it is a balance because we have got to make sure that people understand we have got to move quickly and yet we have got to learn in a way that's going to ensure that the kids are going to get the best of what we need to be able to give them. I think the parent piece of it is critical. I just saw a commercial that had to do with LA Unified recently about the Common Core, and their board president was talking about it. And they showed these little tiny children, little elementary kids, maybe kindergarten, first-grade kids, and the message was they have got to learn algebra and geometry in the kindergarten and first-grade level. Well, I thought, I wonder what people are thinking about that. Are they going to say, what are these folks doing? They've lost their minds. What happened to childhood? So I think it's got to be a balanced message. Certainly we have some time, but we don't have a lot of time. There is a lot to accomplish in a relatively short period of time. Yet it's just work that we know is going to take a long time to get done well. The process is the most important piece, and as long as everybody is continually enhancing the rigor that we provide the kids with the tools and the time and the support that the kids need, it can absolutely be accomplished. It's not so much of a daunting task that is not doable; it's just you got to get busy and you got to get to work that's real quality work.

JENNIFER O'DAY Lynn, did you want to add anything?

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD Well, I think one of the biggest challenges we have had, is in a district our size, we have very accomplished, high-powered curriculum supervisors who oversee their various areas of science and language arts and reading and social studies and science, etcetera. And so we have worked very hard to break down the silos of the work that's done, and it's done really well and we have been very successful. So it's hard for some of our accomplished supervisors to join hands and say, "Okay, how does this thing look across the board, how can we keep that K-12 vision?" And you have a handout that in a very succinct way describes a little bit of that process. But they very much wanted to move forward at their own pace with their own expertise, say, in mathematics; they know what's best in mathematics. But they did not have that K-12 perspective across the board. So that's part of the "Go slow to go fast" is in building that infrastructure at the district level to understand that we are completely united in this and that that common message has to be why are we doing this and what are our expectations as a district instructionally.

So that's been a challenge. The other challenge has been then from the teachers, and our teachers are accomplished teachers, as are yours who say, just give me the model, just give me something to work from, and I can figure out what that instruction looks like. And again, it is that deep, deep understanding of the expectations of the standards that will drive that curriculum alignment, not model lessons that we put in place but we really don't have a deep understanding of why we are shifting that instruction. So in their eagerness to adapt to the expectations, sometimes they step out a little bit ahead and try some things that probably are not in alignment with our common message. So we have to have that continued dialogue across all of our stakeholders at the district level. And in a district our size, that's a challenge.

JENNIFER O'DAY Let's push on that a little bit because I think all of this implies leadership. And I think as people in systems, whether large or small, go about this work trying to figure out how to organize it and who is going to lead it and how you work with those leaders is a critical piece. So I would like each of you to talk a little bit more about that. Who is leading this work in your district? And what kind of work do you do with your leaders to enable them to carry this forward?

SANDY THORSTENSON I would like to introduce Loring Davies and Carlye Olsen, two of our superstars of Whittier Union who are really leading the work: our assistant supe in ED services and our director of curriculum, instruction, assessment, accountability, educational technology. Anyway, but these two folks have really been leading the work. And we have teacher leaders—Carlye works directly with two curriculum assessment coaches that are part-time teacher leaders, part-time districtwide helping out with this work. And they have been very deeply involved in the best practices work and also in the summer PD but then also going out on the campuses on a regular basis and coaching.

In addition to that, we have about 40% of our teachers that have some sort of leadership role. So a wide base of teacher leadership has been very important with not just instruction for those teacher leaders in instructional strategies, but really helping them to learn how to manage other teachers in group dynamics. Just because somebody is a teacher leader doesn't mean that they are really comfortable in being able to facilitate high-level conversations around instructional practice. So group dynamics has been an important part of our training as well. And it's this last summer that teacher leaders who went through the mother of all staff development had to come up with a plan as to how they were going to go back and work with the rest of the teachers in their departments in sharing this work and having them come on board and make sure that they are implementing the constructive response questions that they developed as a team during the summer. So leadership is so critical all the way through, and as Chris mentioned, we too are very blessed at Whittier Union to have what we feel is the best of community, and not just folks who are competent in their content area but are really deeply

committed to this work and deeply committed to kids and will do whatever it takes to make sure that they are successful.

JENNIFER O'DAY Susana, you have also been working with principals around this.

SUSANA CORDOVA Yeah. So I think one of the places where we made a major misstep was last year. So last year, our principals were really focused on the teacher framework and how to go into classrooms and do observations. And while they were working on that, we were working deeply with teachers in content-specific groups, and I think it was a real misstep on our part to not have those two pieces linked together. So principals felt less connected to the deep content of what they were observing, and teachers really struggled with trying to impart the big picture. So it was really focused teacher leaders from every school, and not necessarily a small number. So in an elementary school, there would be a primary-focused language arts and math teacher leader and this intermediate-focused language arts and math, but they really just didn't have the window into how do we translate this at the school as opposed to at the classroom level, and so that was a real misstep. So this year we spent about a week with teacher leaders and principals in collaborative time, really gearing up for how are we going to go into this next year doing it differently. And we will have monthly teacher leadership academies where teachers and principals will come together. The first hour of it, teachers will be with role-alike teachers and principals will be together, and then the second hour of the time they will come together in school-based teams so that it's—part of what we struggle with is a principal's not necessarily in the classroom teaching, and so they need to know the content but they don't necessarily need to know it at that deep level of the classroom teacher, but they need to know it. So it's really trying to get that balance of how deep is deep enough at the leadership level to be able to get that big picture and vision, how deep is deep enough at the classroom teacher level, and how do you get the right mix of those. And so that's something that we are going to be working on this next year.

JENNIFER O'DAY One issue that's come up—came up this morning, it's come up in your presentation, Sandy, you spoke to it most directly—is the issue of equity. We have in this state incredible achievement gaps that have been persistent through the years. You've made a lot of progress; you've made a lot of progress in dealing with those, but they continue. And I know that there is some concern on the parts of many people that in fact this move could in fact exacerbate those gaps in achievement. I would like you to speak a little bit to that, both to the extent that you think that that's the case or a danger and also what you are doing to try to ensure that all kids have access to the standards and the opportunity to be successful with them.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER Well, I would disagree with that thinking.

JENNIFER O'DAY The premise.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER Right, because I think it does the reverse. I think for the first time in our nation's history, we are all going to say that algebra is algebra whether you take Test A or Test B. We can say that now, so I think it's exciting. I think where the responsibility lies back on superintendents and staffs and teachers and everybody is that systemic rollout, the consistent rollout, the high level of professional development, support structures, and as we have heard when we make a misstep, how we go back and work on that and fix it because it's not about this area, geographic area of the city or that type. When you are talking about getting everyone college and career ready, and you work backwards from there, in my opinion, it's pretty clear what you have to do to get everybody there and where you may have to spend more time with certain subgroups. For example, EL students; they are going to need more time to master the English language art standards and others. So the thing is, I think it's how we as leaders use resources for all this rollout and hold ourselves accountable for this long process to take place. So I would totally disagree with the premise; it's actually going to, I believe, make the gaps close much faster.

JENNIFER O'DAY I could have predicted you would say that. Lynn?

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD We have a superintendent who is very visionary, so for a long time has very clearly articulated that equity is a primary concern for us in terms of meeting the needs of all of our students in Hillsborough because we have a very diverse population, as large as we are. We have everything from rural to inner city; we have strawberry farms and cattle farms, and then again very urban experiences as well. So we have worked very hard through curriculum and instruction and our system superintendent to build the instructional support pieces for those students up to this point. So our interventions for our struggling leaders, for example, are very clearly outlined, and we offer reading courses in the State of Florida that most states don't offer. It's typically done through their remediation or the intervention done through English language arts. Same with the mathematics, we have a very specific course of intervention for kids who are struggling with mathematics and that type of thing.

So we have an infrastructure in place, but tying it all together is critical. For example, we are very involved with the Literacy Design Collaborative work that's going forward. All of that is about equity for our students, creating a scaffold of instruction so that they can experience the text complexity, they can experience that whole process of grappling with difficult text and text-dependent questions and creating a product, either written or verbally, that responds to text that they have read. So I think it comes back to looking at the curriculum pieces. Once you get the message across that this is the expectation and this is what the Common Core Standards are asking us or demanding of us to deliver, then you go back to your content people, and we talk very hard and very specifically about all the needs of those students and how do we scaffold that. Because as David Liben said, this is not—like with

the close reading exemplars—this is not a daily occurrence. Close reading exemplars are a piece of the process that you embed into the instructional. The foundational skills have to be there; the scaffolding has to be there for the students, or they won't be successful. So you have to be mindful of both the message that we have to get there but also then the scaffold of how do we get there, and that's where your content expertise comes in.

SUSANA CORDOVA I think it's easy to get people to agree to the concept of equity in a dialogue. What is difficult is, particularly in times of strapped budgets, to make the choices about allocation of resources when people don't feel like there is enough for the base. That's, I think, where we really—

JENNIFER O'DAY I think we understand that concept.

SUSANA CORDOVA Right. And so Denver is a place where almost all budgeting is decentralized, so schools have flexibility to a very large degree with their school budgets. And so I do think that some of what we are really trying to push as a concept is you really do have to start with what does it take to get to the goal, and if kids are further away how do you ensure that you are putting more of your limited resources there as opposed to spreading it equally across. And I think people are really struggling with that concept when they feel like there is not enough for everybody, and so equal feels better than limited resources going disproportionately to some places than other. And I think that unlike it sounds like my colleagues here, our gaps aren't closing and so it's not necessarily getting us the outcomes that we want. And until we can sort of grapple with the tension that we feel around that concept of equal versus equitable, we will continue to have the gaps that we have.

SANDY THORSTENSON Your question brings to mind an experience that we had early on in our common assessment development. I asked our board to support what ended up being three trips. It was my intention to take one, but the trips were so powerful I wanted to take more folks back to visit—and this is when we had money—back to visit Lincolnshire, Illinois, to visit Stevenson High School, a DuFour school. And I told our folks when we went out there the first trip and every trip we went out there—I took, on the first trip I took principals and influential teacher leaders from each campus out there—and I told them on the plane, you cannot look at this work in the context of a very, very wealthy, well-funded school that is high socioeconomic status and mostly white kids. Don't think about that. I said it's going to be really, really hard to do that. Don't think about their staffing, don't think about their class size, don't think about the beauty of these campuses. Think about kids learning, think about their achievement going up every year compared to where they were before, and think about what they are doing and what we can learn from that work.

So we did that. It was a completely different world from us, and it was really hard not to be blinded by the enormous amount of money that they have in

their school systems back there. Well, we came back and I told our folks, what really matters most is the quality of our people, the quality of our teachers and our support staff, and the belief systems that we have that we share with one another, and our commitment to roll in the same direction to really make the most out of everything that we have, with the limited resources that we have. But what we have is quality people. So with that mindset, we were able to over time really make a huge difference in narrowing the achievement gap. And we are still not happy because until we can close that gap, until we can really make sure that our kids understand that when we say all, all means all, all means all, every single child no matter their circumstances.

I grew up in our school district in a really, really poor barrio, and it was a tough thing to go to high school, to be in honors classes with nobody from my neighborhood, nobody from my neighborhood. And to think that there were decisions made back at that time, a long time ago when I was a kid at Whittier High School, based on zip code. And so I tell our new teachers every single year, you can never ever underestimate a child. Don't think about their circumstances; that's why we are here as educators to really impact those lives. So I say, bring on the Common Core. Absolutely it's a daunting task, absolutely we don't have the resources that we need, but we are going to make it happen and we just have to make sure that that vision that we have is a reality.

JENNIFER O'DAY Well, you folks have touched on something that I was going to make my next question anyway. And I am sure it's a question that people are thinking here. You have talked about bringing your teachers together, bringing your principals together, kind of work that actually takes some resources to do. And everybody in this room is from resource-strapped districts; we're a resource-strapped state, is that right? And as I know is the case across the board in your districts as well. So my guess is that people out there are thinking, okay, but so how do we do this with very limited resources. And maybe you could share some of the ways that you have been able to reallocate resources or to think differently about your resources in order to be able to accomplish this work.

SANDY THORSTENSON We use our bell scheduling to create time. And there is never ever enough time, but we have, as I mentioned earlier, weekly collaboration time built into the bell schedule. We also have embedded support built into the bell schedule, so those are required tutorials. So kids who despite our best efforts still struggle are able to be helped because they just need more time and support. It's not that they can't do it; they just need a lot more time and support from a caring teacher who knows what their needs are. So we use time to help us because we don't have the additional money. And unfortunately, this last year we had to increase class size, which is troubling, but our folks are still making it work. I just worry about into the future if we continually have to cut and cut and cut even more so, I don't know how we

would continue to do the work just on knowing that we are here to provide the hope and opportunity for our kids and make it work. But I think time—when we heard earlier today that the folks in Singapore and Japan and Finland have this really wonderful amount of time to plan together, I thought, gosh, what we could do. It's a miracle that we are able to do what we do with the little amount of resources that we have. So I think we just have to use what we have very, very, very smartly.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER And I would add ,Jennifer, that some of it is noncost, like restructuring of the day and doing interventions differently, and which have been very successful. But the other part is sitting down, and hopefully you have a board that's very supportive and understands the process and says, as we heard, break down all the silos, put all the funding sources, whether they be foundations or state or federal monies, and then redirect those monies for that specific purpose. And so where Long Beach used to be—when I was a principal, we were very decentralized in our budgeting process; we are very centralized now because we know that's the only way to get through these troubled times. And people are okay with it because they know where we are going; they know that we are going to spend more money on X because X is needed over here. I will give you a great example. In California, there is a thing called Restricted Lottery; it's Resource 6300. You have \$14 per kid. We give the money out to our schools, my schools didn't spend \$700,000 last year, which is roughly 50% of their allocation. So we need to buy informational text, so we are taking that \$700,000 and we are going to spend it on informational text. And so it's those types of things where we put it out there, and everyone is okay with that as long as they know where it's going down the road.

JENNIFER O'DAY The other thing I think that you do in Long Beach that is very difficult for a lot of districts to do is you stop doing what doesn't work.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER Yeah, we will stop doing things if the data says it doesn't work, whether it be a school program. We had a single gender academy that we did for three years and it didn't work, and we stopped it. So we will stop. We evaluate all the time. Then it goes back to those meetings. My deputy superintendent, the chief business financial officer, the assistant supes, and myself meet on a weekly basis, and we are literally moving millions of dollars around on a regular basis to meet the needs. It's a daunting task, but you have to do it in order to meet the needs of the students and the teachers.

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD And that's the same in Hillsborough. Our superintendent does every two weeks a check of all the budgets. They meet weekly with the superintendent staff. All the money is on the table. And if it's not producing what they expect in whatever category it's in, they move it. And they have made some tough decisions that weren't particularly accepted by the teaching rank at the beginning, moving from a six-period to a seven-period day and that type of thing. But that was coming down the pike, as they say, in terms of that

budget deficit in Florida. And our superintendent was visionary enough to know it was coming and made those shifts, as unpopular as they were, to try and capture back some funding that could be used instructionally.

Everything is transparent. The superintendent communicates with our entire district by our internal e-mail on a very regular basis with budget updates. She is very, very connected to the state. DOE in states on the same line as the folks that are making budget decisions at the state level. And the additional piece we have—and it's not a large department, but we have two or three people who are aggressive grant folks in our district. So they are constantly reviewing all of the grant feeds and trying to find funding that will support our initiatives, not necessarily brand-new initiatives, not to bring in more unless it's connected to what we have already begun in our process, but to support and continue the funding for that.

So we have recouped a lot of the losses that we've seen in Florida by that very definite focus on looking for the grants that are out there that will support the work we are involved in.

JENNIFER O'DAY Does anyone have anything...

SUSANA CORDOVA Well, I think probably just two things. We don't do any professional development that's not focused on our three major priorities. So everything else is gone. And then we really look for sites that are interested in doing innovative different ways of structuring the day, structuring the year, use of time, and really try to support those as models so that we can figure what are different ways to do it. I think for the most part, you can go into schools, and they will look exactly the way they looked when we went to school, when our parents went to school. It's really hard to change some of those things, particularly around the use of time, around the use of staff.

And so we are really trying to break some of those molds, not every place and not all at once, but really pushing for innovation so that we can figure out some new and different ways. So we will have some schools opening this year that take the exact same teacher contract, number of days, and use that differently so that teachers have a 180-day work year; kids will get a 200-day school year by flexing when people are working and when they are not, by using shorter time on PD days to get longer time on teacher-student contact days, things like that that look at same amount of money used differently.

JENNIFER O'DAY So also one way of making limited resources go farther is through partnerships and collaboration. And I know that each of your districts is involved in some way in collaborating or partnering with other districts either in your area or nationally. And it's something, as I think we heard this morning, that we are really hoping to interest and engage people in this room in doing is partnering with one another. And the whole idea of now having Common Core Standards

is that it really enables us to do more of that. So I thought it might be helpful for people to hear a little bit about the kinds of partnerships that you are engaged in with other districts and what you are gaining from that, why you think that's worth—because partnerships also take time, right?—why you think it's worth the time that you invest in those partnerships to do that work.

SANDY THORSTENSON I was going to try to figure out how to tie in that partnership question to a comment I wanted to make real quickly about the last question. You talked about resources, but I want us to talk about partnering as well. Our schools partner with each other where they are not loosely associated schools. One of our schools, Whittier High School, was in corrective action in my first year as superintendent. And when you are talking about resources, getting the very, very best people, putting the right people on the right seats in the bus, I moved Loring Davies; I went after him. He was a superstar principal in a different, neighboring district, and I recruited him really, really hard. It took me a while; he finally came along.

I recruited him really hard to come to Whittier High School. And at the same time, I moved our best assistant principals from the other schools into that school, and I moved three teacher leaders into that school, and I moved in a counselor leader and moved in two classified people. And all the people that I moved in, I had to take out folks who didn't believe in themselves or in kids. So putting—we didn't have any additional staff; we just put the right staff in the right places.

So that helped to get that school up off its knees and out of corrective action faster than any other school that had gotten out of corrective action. And it didn't require changing half the staff. It was just critical people that helped everybody else understand, well, either stand up straight and get the work done or clap and say, thank goodness, people are noticing that there are some slackers around here or people who don't understand what customer service really means. But that partnering among all the schools, when I went to the other administrators and said, "Please, you don't serve just the kids at your school; you serve kids in all of our communities."

So that was an example of partnering and really using the resources. But the other example about partnering: we cannot do this really amazingly difficult work in four years. We are a high school district, which I know is unusual. But we knock ourselves out, and it is a lot more time, but we really work hard at partnering with those elementary districts whose kids become our kids and with Whittier College and with the community college that's in our backyard as well.

So it's absolutely impossible to do this work without partnering. We live in a community that is very rich with nonprofits, and they also help out, whether it's YMCA, the Boys' and Girls' Club or Whole Child or Soroptomist Alliance, Rotary, and they are all very interconnected. We have this beautifully

symbiotic relationship with all of these organizations that we partner with, including the three cities that we serve, Whittier, Santa Fe Springs, and Norwalk. So the chambers are very involved with mentoring for our kids. It's just absolutely impossible to do this work without partnering.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER And I would agree, Long Beach is very blessed. We have our partners from Fresno are here, and we have a great partnership with them for many, many years. And then we also partner with Garden Grove down the street from Long Beach. It's about 20 miles away; it's about a 50,000-student district. And then we are a member of an organization called CORE with seven other districts. And the power of partnering is that we can go much faster because you have more minds doing the work, and it's about development of work, but it's also about sharing of personnel. And we are a much better district today because of partnership.

And I will give you one good example. Fresno did a great thing with algebra, and they tried this new experiment of placing kids in algebra with support, and it was very successful. Because of that partnership and because of that, what I call goal to do that in Fresno, we took that great idea, implemented it, and our number of kids in algebra in eighth grade has gone from 35% to 65%, with the efficiency rate at 65%. So now I have a bigger problem in high school. I have hundreds of kids taking physics and chemistry and algebra II and all these courses, which is a great problem because we're, like Whittier, we're approaching a 55% A-G completion rate, so which is phenomenal. But it's because of those concepts and people working together, who are willing to take risk, and then we would learn from them.

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD And we have really sought out partners across the board. As I mentioned earlier, and Susana and Denver is a part of the work we are doing with the Dana Center and the Aspen Institute as thought partners. The Dana Center is very hands-on with their staff development. The Aspen Institute is wonderful at keeping us connected with the leaders in the nation on Common Core and the opportunity to work with the Student Achievement Partners. So we have aggressively sought out those partnerships. We didn't wait for them to come to us; we went to them.

And that connection, then, with Denver and Baltimore City and an early implementers grant—and it's not grant as in money as given to us, but the grant as in we are connected in terms of thinking together and meeting together throughout the year with our partners in Denver and our partners in Baltimore City to talk about where we are and what our needs are and what they have used that we could use, what we have used that they could use, that type of thing.

So those national pieces have been very, very important for us. Within the state, we have had some shifting in our state department with our

commissioner and our chancellors over the past couple of years. So it's been a little bit of challenge to keep a consistent process moving forward. And a specific example is as we are working with the Literacy Design Collaborative through some Gates funding that we received, the Gates folks went to various state departments and wanted them to partner. And Colorado was one of those state implementers, Louisiana, and—what was the third one?—Kentucky, which is a huge implementer of the Literacy Design Collaborative in both math and literacy, the Math Design Collaborative.

Florida did not bite on that because of what was happening politically with the shifting of positions. So the National Literacy Project partners came into play and united the districts. So we support the National Literacy Project folks in trying to work with the districts within the State of Florida to build that despite the lack of hands-on support. The state department is supportive of the initiative; they just don't have the resources to be able to give to that right now. So those partnerships that we built within our state with the national partners that are there, but also within our district partners, really has been critical.

Our assistant superintendent is very clear that we are not in this just for Hillsborough, that we are in this for kids, which means that all of our colleagues in the state and nationally are a part of our process. So it's very definitely a message and a mindset that we have in our district that's shared with everyone that we come in contact with.

SUSANA CORDOVA I think the best promise that we have, and Chris, you alluded to this before, is with common standards, there really is this opportunity for there to this common sort of knowledge sharing of lessons and units that doesn't necessarily have to go through vendors, that doesn't necessarily have to be for profit, that really does level the playing field. And so when you think about the implications for that at the national level, it really, I think, holds tremendous, tremendous promise. That's where we need our philanthropic partners to really step into the gap is really taking this out of the hand of publishers because we have, all of us have great people in our curriculum departments, in our classrooms who are constantly creating new things. And for it to live just in a single district really is going to be a shame, or for it to become the province only of vendors, I think, is a real missed opportunity.

JENNIFER O'DAY So to continue on that a little bit and to move into a slightly different topic. I know, Chris, that CORE districts, the districts of CORE, have been working around assessment, seeing that as an integral piece of the implementation efforts around the Common Core. And certainly assessment came up a lot this morning, and it also came up a lot in the profiles and the interviews that you all participated in with the different districts. Assessment is a challenge, I mean, in this period of time of transition. Can you folks say a little bit about how you are approaching both the use of formative assessment tools and

development of formative assessment tools, but also how you are anticipating the shift to new summative assessments with the consortium?

CHRIS STEINHAUSER Well, as part of CORE, the eight school districts have committed to work together to develop modules and so on. For example, these last two months, we have developed modules that we will be piloting and sharing. Now as Susana said, the whole idea is once these are vetted and proven reliable and so on, they would become open source to anybody in the nation that wants to use them. That's the commitment of CORE. So that is unbelievable professional development.

So for us in Long Beach, we have redesigned our entire K-2 assessments as you go down, and so that will be rolled out new this year. We are going to take a slow-to-go-fast approach. So some of them will be locally developed; others, as Smarter Balanced and others get on board, we may use those. And so we are developing them as we go along right now and using those, and there may come a point where we may have a hybrid system to be bringing on as well.

SUSANA CORDOVA Well, I am sure Colorado is very different from you all because our teachers think we test too much. Right? We were really intentional in starting off with talking about instructional tasks and not instructional assessments. And so it was really, really intentional to start that way, so that anything that was formative was considered part of a classroom-based experience to try to help out with some of those issues. So we really tried to approach the formative piece by wrapping it around professional development, grade-level or content-based, course-based professional development and then using it as an opportunity to both learn the new teaching and the instructional shift piece as well as getting assessment data, formative assessment data from the classroom without it feeling like it was another sort of reach into the classroom to force assessments so that there is never any teaching time.

So we are really trying to get that balance of it. I think as time continues, that shift toward what the assessments look like—every time I see these assessments, that is that part of me where I sort of go like, “Ugh!” Like you see these exemplars that are coming out of Park or out of Smarter Balanced, and you think about the use of technology. I mean, I think we hear “online assessments” and we are thinking multiple choice. This is not your mother’s online assessment system; it’s a brave new world of online assessments, and the idea of being able to manipulate and do modeling, the idea of being able to highlight passages in text and then have a series of answers be connected to different parts of the text based on whatever the student highlights, it ups the ante in an incredibly, incredibly rigorous way. And so there is a lot, I think, that we need to be ready for that.

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD And I can't wait. I cannot wait for the new assessments because as we talk with our teachers for the first time, we will have standards that drive

curriculum that will be assessed in the way that curriculum is taught with a teacher evaluation that measures that same set of metrics. Because we have lived in a real gap era in Florida for a while and currently will for the next two years with our Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, FCAT, which is tied to our, as I mentioned earlier, teachers' paychecks. So it's a very frustrating kind of experience for a lot of our teachers right now that they are being assessed on instructional standards that we are shifting away from and have to be addressing to be prepared for that 2014-15 new assessment date.

But when we get there, with all of the issues absolutely that come along with it in terms of the administration piece of it, we will for the first time, in my career, actually be assessing what we are instructing based on standards that expect high quality in every classroom. So it's an exciting time for us. And it is definitely fraught with lots of discussion about all the technology and what do we do with all of the multiple assessments. In Florida, we have, our superintendent as well, but multiple superintendents who have signed on to a protest document being sent to the state legislature to stop the madness with the testing. So it's a huge issue in Florida, the whole assessment piece.

SANDY THORSTENSON I think our teachers are a bit anxious about what's going to happen with CSTs during this transition period. But as I sat with a group of our English teachers earlier this summer in our PD, it was exciting to hear them really relish the idea of writing becoming a real serious priority across, not just for English teachers, but across all subject areas. And they were very thrilled about multiple choice not being the driver for assessment, that kids are really going to have more—with constructive response, performance tasks. It's really embedded across the whole assessment system. So there is so much about the switch to Common Core that makes sense that's going to be much better for kids, but it's just a huge shift in the system.

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD If we get into the classrooms, and we do what we need to do with that curriculum shift, those assessments will be fine. We will be in place and ready. It's just making sure that we have those very thoughtful curriculum pieces in place.

JENNIFER O'DAY I want to leave a few minutes for questions, but I wanted to give each of you a chance, just like one minute each, say something about what keeps you up at night at this point in your implementation process, and what do you see either as a key lesson you would want to impart to the folks here or a key promise that you see in the work that you are doing, that we are all doing. Lynn, let's just start with you.

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD Okay. What keeps me up at night? For us, it's the capacity; it's the scaling to the level that we have to do in a district of our size to make sure that all of our teachers understand what our expectations are and that they are well equipped to meet those expectations, that our parents are

knowledgeable about the shifts that we are making and what their role is, that our community's involved. So there's just so many people that we have to connect with and connect strongly with with our message of what Common Core is and why we are doing it.

So it is the sheer number and size of making all of that make sense for everybody on the same level of understanding. The piece that, I think, is hopeful I just shared with you—I jumped the gun—but it is truly that idea that for the first time, we will have alignment across our instructional expectations, across our assessments with the students, and across our teacher evaluation process as well, so that we all have a very clear picture of what a good instructional model looks like, how it should be delivered, and how it should be assessed.

JENNIFER O'DAY Susana.

SUSANA CORDOVA I think probably what keeps me up at night is thinking about whether or not we are going to be able to do this work in a way that does have equitable outcomes for kids. It's something that I worry about a lot. Probably what I think is my biggest hope about this work is I think it details a much clearer picture of what it is that we want, and I completely believe in the ability of our people to do it. And so with that vision and the right people and the right supports, it's doable.

JENNIFER O'DAY Sandy.

SANDY THORSTENSON What I worry about most is providing our teachers with what they need. We just continually have to cut and cut because of the state fiscal crisis. And I worry about how much longer before our folks just start to crumble under the burden of everything that they have had to endure with increased class sizes and salary cuts and less instructional time and less instructional support, materials, fewer support people. All of that, at some point it takes a toll, and it's amazing that it hasn't already.

So I just am so hopeful that things will turn around as far as our resources before things just start to crumble around the edges. I just don't want to even think like that. I keep thinking I just have to keep everybody pumped and know that, no matter what happens, we still have that common moral purpose of serving these kids that are entrusted to us.

JENNIFER O'DAY Chris.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER What I'm most excited about is the equal opportunity that all students in this nation are going to have. I am very excited. In fact, I am actually looking forward to Common Core 2 ten years from now.

JENNIFER O'DAY That's the Long Beach way.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER But what really concerns me, and I apologize for being political, is the lack of leadership in this state. I can't speak for anybody else, only in this state, because as we have heard, the lack of resources is destroying—they are holding our hands back. So yes, we don't have any money, but we could use our money that we have today in a much better way if they would take all the strings off and let us do what we need to do. It's not much money, but we would have much better freedom.

But because we are so hesitant to jump in the pool—I learned to swim by being thrown in the pool, and thank God, I could get to the side. But the thing is you have to do that at times, especially in an area of crisis because we are going to make mistakes but because of the collaboration in the air, we are in such better shape today than we have ever been to work together to get through it. So that's my political statement for the day. You know I'd have one.

JENNIFER O'DAY I did. I was expecting something. So I think we have time for a couple of questions or comments from the floor. I mean, you all, I know, are dealing with many of the same issues.

(INFORMAL TALK)

AUDIENCE MEMBER Hi, good afternoon. Christopher Maricle from the California School Boards Association. This has been a great conversation, and each of you has touched on some governance areas, but I wanted to ask you specifically, as you have implemented this work, what support and guidance and decisions have you had to go to the board for, what do you need from the board, and what do they need from you, how do you work with the board on these issues, and what have been the stumbling blocks from the board, if any?

SANDY THORSTENSON I can tell you we couldn't do this work without the support of our board. We have a very, very diverse board in their political thinking and in pretty much everything else. But what they are not diverse in is their commitment to our kids. So they are very engaged in exactly what we are doing, they read along with us with the materials that we are reading, and they are incredibly supportive. We also have a hugely supportive employee association group, actually all three of our employee associations are very professional, very student centered and work in a very collaborative way with administration and with the board. So it's what helps us to be able to get the chains off and to really run as fast as we can. So we absolutely could not do it without our board. And I know several of my superintendent colleagues—Chris is not one of them—who have board members who honestly get in the way, rather than really helping to grow the work, they're impeding it. And it's a sad thing to see because there's too many other obstacles that we have to deal with. The board should never ever be an obstacle, and we are very blessed to have a board that's absolutely not an obstacle; they are just the opposite.

CHRIS STEINHAUSER And I would second that. My board is unbelievable. They set policy, they hire and acquire the superintendent, and then they are kept abreast of all the issues, and they hold us accountable. And they talk about how they can support us in moving the mission. And again, as Sandy has said, everybody is student focused. Students come first from the unions, to the teachers, to the staff, to the board members. And so when you have that type of culture, you can really move the shift forward in these most difficult times.

JENNIFER O'DAY In both of your cases, though, you have had consistent leadership over a period of time that has actually built that culture, I think. So that's also another lesson here.

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD We do have some board members that initially had some philosophical concerns about it. They were very caught up in the college ready and didn't feel like their career ready was maybe as addressed as strongly as they would have liked. We have some different philosophical visions on the board. Fortunately, because of the culture, we do have access, and we have continued conversation about the work that we are doing as a district and how we are addressing their concerns.

So it isn't a total 100% woo hoo; this is what we all believe, which is I think helpful for us in the long run because it does bring those perspectives to the table that we have to address because we have many, many constituents in the district that probably feel the same. So we need to keep that mindset in the forefront of our thinking and how do we address those very legitimate and real concerns and issues that they bring to the table. So it's a very healthy dialogue for us with the door open to that conversation.

SUSANA CORDOVA So Denver has a split board. We have seven board members in a 4/3 split. And I think whenever you have got a divided board, it is very time-consuming to get anything done, and it is true in this case as well. So any conversations around assessments are pretty polarizing; any conversations around the use of instructional materials are pretty polarizing. And so I do think it's an unfortunate way to spend time, particularly given that the urgency of the work is so high. But they are the voice of the people at this point, and so that's a dialogue that's going to continue to play out until elections change that.

JENNIFER O'DAY That's diplomatic.

SUSANA CORDOVA Thank you.

JENNIFER O'DAY Do we have time for one more question, or do we need to end now? One more. Do we have one more question?

AUDIENCE MEMBER Two of you use Dana Center. Could you talk a little bit more about that?

SUSANA CORDOVA Sure. So we have been really fortunate. We have been part of the Aspen Institute for several years now. The Dana Center provides technical assistance in math and the work that we have done around math assessments, math curriculum, math professional development. And the Aspen Institute has provided us with technical assistance in the area of language arts. And it has been a tremendous gift to us to be part of a national network. And I would really encourage you if you are part of the Council of the Great City Schools, if you are part of a state-level network, to really use those partnerships to the greatest extent that you can.

I completely agree with the whole concept of, like, steal the very best ideas that you can. The tool that you have in your packet, that is a district readiness tool we have used in Denver as well. It was incredibly powerful to go through that level of conversation and to have thought partners who are thinking about how do you structure that conversation for stakeholders, how do you even name who your stakeholders are. It's been just very valuable to us.

LYNN DOUGHERTY-UNDERWOOD And we have branched out in our work with the Dana Center because they are known for their math; they're at the University of Texas, Austin. But they also have a wealth of tools. I had no idea when I went to meet with them last November the number of school reform, change theory. They are very steeped in a long history of professional development opportunities. So they are working with our leadership teams, our site-based leadership teams to create folks that can go back to the schools and really think through the change theory process with their teachers around Common Core. So they have a wealth of tools that are available that they are willing to share.