Dear Colleagues,

We have been eagerly planning our 2020 Inquiry Institute in Charleston for several months. Sara Ahmed, Nancy Steineke, Kristin Ziemke, Chad Everett, and I have been taking research trips there, meeting at NCTE, reading historical accounts, gathering resources – and we can tell you, we are really psyched for January 17-20!

Looking back, we have conducted about 60 of these special residential events, with Heinemann coming on as our fabulous sponsor for the past dozen, during which time we have assembled our dream-team faculty.

As registrations are coming in for this year's meeting, we often hear how hard it is for teachers to get district approval and funding to join in events like ours.

Not long ago, intensive educational retreats were a routine feature of our professional development universe. Indeed, the National Writing Project, arguably the best-disseminated professional development model of the past forty years, regularly mounted scores of three-week retreats every summer for decades.

But these days, budget constraints and some state rules have made it less common for educators to spend extended time with national colleagues and prominent leaders. And that's too bad. Residential conferences like Heinemann's Multiday Institutes provide a very high return on a district's investment in time, travel, and support. Among the benefits:

Grow your team. As other professions continue to recognize, taking a team away from the everyday workplace, to embark on an "all-in" experience together can be transformational. In an energizing environment, with a challenging and relevant program, colleagues can focus undistracted on their goals, next steps, and problem solving, while building deeper friendship and support among team members to help make change happen back home.

Learn from your national colleagues:
Especially these days, a national perspective is critical. Our Institutes typically attract educators from all around the U.S. and from international schools across the globe. You meet counterparts who are facing the same problems you are – school climate, standards, assessments, social justice, and student engagement. But these new friends often have different, creative, and adaptable solutions that we can borrow for our own work.

Get personal time with leaders and authors: At Heinemann institutes we all work, eat, research, and socialize together. There's time for everyone to get

know leaders personally, get specific questions answered, to just hang out, and to stay in touch after the event is over.

Engage a stimulating setting.
One reason that professionals attend retreat events is to break from home concerns, leave behind everyday patterns, and gain new energy. But Heinemann does more than arrange lovely settings – we incorporate the surrounding culture directly into the program. In our Charleston, Santa Fe, and New Orleans events, for example, every participant chooses a locally-focused inquiry question and works with a small team to investigate and share new learning. This inquiry project model is directly portable back to K-12 classrooms and schools. The big difference here is that teachers don't just hear about ideas for instructional improvement, they *live them* in real time.

Develop future leaders. Today's teachers need and deserve growth paths that allow them to move ahead in their practice, and in their assumption of leadership roles over a career. It is rewarding and motivating for such promising teachers to attend high-level events that accelerate their development. We typically have leaders of all kinds in our institutes.

Return Home Energized:
Retreat graduates leave with the latest research, teaching and leadership ideas, solid plans, and an email list of people they've worked with face to face – a national support system for the years to come.

We hope to see many of you in Charleston as we gather tools for engaging our kids in student directed inquiry and build a community of inquiry among ourselves – Charleston style.

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