Chestnut Hill, Mass. (4/5/2016) – Eight large educational systems from around the world will attend the inaugural summit of the Atlantic Rim Collaboratory, an international initiative to examine and improve elementary and secondary education systems throughout the world.

Founding organizations include the Ministries of Education of Scotland, Iceland, Norway, Aruba and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Ontario, the Office of the Secretary of Education in Vermont, and the California Board of Education, said Boston College Brennan Professor of Education Andy Hargreaves, the group’s founder.

“The initial vision of the Atlantic Rim Collaboratory is to establish a global group of educational systems that advances equity, excellence, wellbeing, inclusion, democracy and human rights for all students within high-quality, professionally-run systems,” said Hargreaves, of the Lynch School of Education.

Each system will send a minister and deputy minister, or equivalent, and a leader of one of the region’s professional associations, such as a teachers union or superintendents association.

“California can benefit from exploring education improvement strategies similar to ours in other countries,” said California Board of Education President Michael W. Kirst, professor emeritus at Stanford University. “This meeting should be very useful for our continuous improvement efforts.”

In addition to the national, provincial and state leaders, Hargreaves said the collaboratory has enlisted the support of some of the world’s leading education scholars and change leaders, including American Educational Research Association (AERA) President Jeannie Oakes, Colombia’s Escuela Nueva Director and prestigious $500,000 WISE Award winner Vicky Colbert, Singapore National Institute of Education’s Pak Tee Ng and Finnish education policy expert and prize-winning author Pasi Sahlberg. Steve Munby, CEO of Britain’s Education Development Trust, will serve as facilitator for the summit.

Though its name conjures up a geographic image, the collaboratory takes its lead from a shared set of values focused on democratic ideals and Western education standards and practices within a rapidly changing world of global communication and migration, Hargreaves said.

“There are so many problems to solve in the world at this moment, but there is a constant to need support and improve the schools that educate our children and grandchildren,” said Hargreaves, who serves as an advisor to Ontario’s Ministry of Education. “These systems have demonstrated records of success that place them among the best in the world or have aspirations to improve their success in relation to these core values. I think they can teach us all a great deal.”

Joining Hargreaves in making the announcement were Iceland’s Minister of Education, Science and Culture Illugi Gunnarsson and Yngve Lindvig, chief research and development officer at Conexus in Norway.

Slated to take place September 14 and 15 in Reykjavik, the inaugural summit will focus on how the high-quality systems represented are preparing for the future demands on schools and teachers; defining a vision and strategy for the group and developing a three-year plan of action.
Hargreaves said the collaboratory will work in a way that complements the international initiatives of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations, but it will exercise its ability to advance a more expansive vision of educational excellence that embraces issues such as special education inclusion, many kinds of diversity, and wellness supports within systems that build and promote a strong and sustainable teaching profession.

In the US, following the Every Student Succeeds Act, greater responsibility for education policy-making is shifting to state officials. Yet many US states – some larger than many nations – do not have a tradition of interacting with policy makers and professional peers internationally. The Atlantic Rim Collaboratory provides an example of and opportunity for states to work more globally.

The summit will honor the 30th anniversary of the meeting between President Ronald Reagan and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Iceland, said Hargreaves.

“One of the founding ideas behind Atlantic Rim is to tear down the walls between countries and regions, as well as between educational researchers and politicians, in order to pursue the most fundamental ideas of what it means to be educated in today’s world for the mutual benefit of all ARC-systems and future generations of students worldwide,” said Hargreaves.