

November 17, 2016

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform on December 6-7 in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). We are grateful to the whole OUSD team for their willingness to host the meeting and share their efforts to integrate social and emotional learning (SEL) with academic learning in the service of broader equity goals.

This meeting builds on the Collaborative's longstanding attention to implementation of the Common Core Standards, through which we have explored the development of academic knowledge and skills through multiple lenses over the years. Although those skills are critical to students' K-12 and postsecondary success, members have emphasized that interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are equally important to achieving success with the Common Core and in life after high school. Indeed, our meetings have emphasized that students' SEL competencies may in fact be preconditions for meaningful academic engagement—especially in environments where trauma profoundly impacts students' lives inside and outside of school. It is with that backdrop that we are excited to learn about efforts underway in Oakland, where district actions have deliberately focused on SEL for many years. The meeting title, *Integrating Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning to Advance Equity and Achievement*, emphasizes both the interrelated components of SEL efforts and the ways in which they seek to address broader issues of equity and access.

### Meeting Overview

Day 1: The meeting will begin Tuesday morning with Superintendent Antwan Wilson and Deputy Superintendent for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Devin Dillon setting the context of the Oakland community. Their presentation will provide an overview of the district's work and make the case for why SEL is an important tool for addressing the needs and challenges of Oakland's students. We will continue to build the case for why SEL matters through a session in which participants explore data from the CORE Districts and the demonstrated connections between SEL competencies and academic performance.

Having set the stage for SEL, we will turn to the strategies OUSD has pursued to integrate the social, emotional, and academic aspects of student learning. First, we will lead the group through an exercise with a team of Mills College teacher scholars in which a teacher poses an academic challenge he or she is experiencing to a set colleagues, complete with footage of classroom instruction to illustrate the problem. The teacher team will then discuss what they observe and identify ways in which the presenting teacher might employ particular SEL competencies to address the academic challenge. Participants will then engage with each other and with the teacher scholars to further explore these connections. From an activity focused on pedagogy, we will transition to a conversation about curriculum. As part of its efforts to integrate SEL into student learning experiences, OUSD has selected academic curricula that incorporate SEL and, beginning this school year, has also begun implementing SEL-specific curricula in classrooms district-wide. This portion of the session will enable meeting participants to explore some of the challenges and opportunities emerging from this nascent effort.

Tuesday will conclude with a focus on adults. From the outset of its SEL work, district leaders in Oakland recognized that intrapersonal and interpersonal skills were important not only for students

to experience success, but to foster productive interactions among adults and between adults and students. We will learn about some of the strategies that OUSD has employed to build SEL competencies among district leaders, school leaders, and teachers, and the experiences of some of those leaders in the process. As usual, we will end the day with an opportunity for networking and collective relaxation over dinner, this time at Picán Restaurant in Oakland.

Day 2: On Wednesday morning, we will turn our discussion to issues of equity, and more particularly to the intersection of SEL with efforts to empower underserved students for success in school and in life after school. Understanding and responding to the ways in which race and class shape students' opportunities inside and outside school, their interactions with others, and their own identities is critical to realizing more equitable education systems. This session will begin with reflections from several districts on the role that SEL can play in helping students define their place in school and society, after which we will break into small groups to explore matters of race and equity in greater depth.

The meeting will conclude with issues of measurement. Although school systems feature well-established practices for tracking students' academic progress, the same is not true for SEL competencies. Meeting participants will therefore explore approaches for monitoring the degree to which systems, and students in particular, are achieving the goals that SEL strategies seek to accomplish. We will also address another purpose of measurement, making the work visible to help people understand what it entails and the progress underway.

### Readings

As usual, all readings and reference materials for the sessions are available in multiple formats. If you requested a hard copy of the binder, all of the materials will be included there; the cover sheet behind each tab identifies a subset of the readings as priority readings that we suggest you read before the meeting. **For your convenience, on Friday, November 18, you will also receive an email with this subset of priority pre-meeting readings attached. We strongly encourage you to read these materials prior to the meeting,** as they provide important background information on the topics we will discuss. Also for your convenience, all of the meeting materials are available on the Collaborative website at <http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting31> and via DropBox at a link you will receive via email.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Dawn Smith at 650.843.8239 or [dsmith@air.org](mailto:dsmith@air.org). If have any other questions, please email me ([joday@air.org](mailto:joday@air.org)) or give me a call at 202.262.4987. I look forward to seeing you all next month!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O'Day  
Chair, California Collaborative on District Reform, and  
Institute Fellow, American Institutes for Research