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January 2, 2013

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We are looking forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform on January 10-11 in San Jose. Many thanks to Vince Matthews and his team for hosting the meeting and for putting forward a set of provocative topics from which we can all learn. I know that many in the Collaborative have been anxious to hear about the work in San Jose Unified, and this meeting will allow us an opportunity to do so in the context of the district's strategic planning process and early implementation efforts.

It will also allow us to draw upon several themes from past meetings. SJUSD's focus on **21st century skills** ties in well with our exploration of college and career readiness and implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The emphasis on **closing opportunity gaps** taps into an equity theme that has run through most of our meetings, and SJUSD's effort to **alter the way that central office and other leaders do their work** will draw on previous discussions of system change and implementation.

In addition to the discussions of district-level strategies, we have set aside time on January 11 to delve into two critical issues of **state policy**. First, we will build on our opportunity gap session on January 10, as well as on previous Collaborative meetings, to explore potential indicators that could be incorporated into a **revised state accountability system**, based on SB1458's amendments to California's Public School Accountability Act. Second, we will have the opportunity to consider the Governor's proposed budget, which will be released on January 10. In particular, we want to discuss next steps in the move toward a revised school finance system in California, reflecting on **current proposals for a weighted pupil formula** in the state.

With this meeting, we are also trying to incorporate feedback received from our members about the format and content of the meetings. (Thank you to those of you who spoke with our consultant Katherine Casey about our work together.) You will notice that we have streamlined the binder of readings. We have also incorporated more variety in session formats, including smaller working groups on Day 1 and a new "consultancy" format on Day 2. We are trying to tie the district-focused dialogue more directly to state policy and to provide more opportunities for reflecting on the readings and engaging both research and practice. This is, as always, a work in progress, and we look forward to your feedback.

Meeting Overview:

Day 1: We will begin Thursday morning with a short presentation from Vince Matthews and his colleagues about San Jose Unified School District. Vince will give a brief overview of his district's strategic plan and key performance measures, including his rationale for focusing on 21st century skills and closing the opportunity gap. This presentation will be followed by ample time for group discussion and will help frame the dialogue throughout the rest of the meeting.

The California Collaborative on District Reform (www.cacollaborative.org) joins researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and funders in ongoing, evidence-based dialogue and collaborative activity to improve instruction and student learning for all students in California's urban school systems.

From there we will move to a consideration of the research base for 21st century learning. David Pearson, former dean of the School of Education at UC-Berkeley and a member of the National Research Council's Committee on Defining Deeper Learning and 21st Century Skills, will discuss the committee's recent report and its implications for instruction and implementation of the Common Core.

The majority of Thursday afternoon will then be devoted to the disparities among students in their opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the 21st century. Our focus will be on identifying and measuring opportunity gaps in order to develop strategies for addressing them. Many of our district leaders have contributed artifacts from their own districts, and we have also included some student survey measures directly relevant to 21st century learning opportunities. We will break up into smaller working groups to examine these artifacts, using them to explore the range of indicators relevant to opportunity to learn. Our goal is to move toward a common framework for defining and measuring opportunity gaps. This discussion will also help lay the foundation for Friday's session on SB1458.

As is our usual practice, after a day of thought-provoking dialogue, we will gather for more informal conversation and relaxation at a group reception and dinner.

Day 2: Friday morning we will turn to a key implementation issue faced by San Jose: how best to transfer 21st century skills to the adults in the system –particularly its leaders – so that the entire district, not just the students, aligns itself with 21st century learning goals. We will begin with a panel of SJUSD leaders and then use a consultancy approach to facilitate collective problem-solving and support San Jose's current efforts. We will conclude the meeting with an exploration of the two policy issues outlined above.

Readings:

As usual, the priority readings for the sessions are located directly behind each tab, followed by additional readings for your reference. We have tried to keep the pre-reading to a minimum, with only 1-2 pieces for each session. For the opportunity gap session, the district artifacts are located in a separate folder, divided into three separate packets, one for each of the small working groups. We recommend that you review all of the artifacts if possible because the working group assignments will not be shared until the day of the meeting. In addition, as background for the consultancy session on Friday, we have included Patrick Lencioni's book *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*, which SJUSD is using as a reference for their leadership development. We suggest that you read the last section if you can.

For your convenience, we have enclosed two other resources in the front sleeve of the binder. The first is a CD that contains all of the briefing binder's materials. These same materials are also available on our website: <http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting-20/>. We have also included a copy of our recently released brief—*Learning from the Past: Drawing from California's CLAS experience to inform assessment of the Common Core*— in case you have not already seen it.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Suzanne Claussen at 650.843.8192 or sclaussen@air.org. If you have any other questions, please email me (joday@air.org) or give me a call (202.262.4987). I look forward to seeing you all later this month!

Sincerely,



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