

June 10, 2022

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

As an especially challenging school year draws to a close, we are excited to gather in person for our upcoming meeting in Burbank on June 23-24. During this convening, we will continue our year-long deep dive into matters of educational equity, this time using the lens of Burbank Unified School District (USD) to ground our discussions. We are grateful to Matt Hill and his team—including a phenomenal pair of student activists who contributed to the planning of these sessions—for their willingness to host the group and share key aspects of their equity journey.

Recognizing that we are still navigating the process of adapting to in-person events, we have again designed the meeting to create ample space to engage in substantive discussions, rekindle relationships among longstanding Collaborative members, and foster connections with newer members of the group.

### **Meeting Overview**

Day 1: The meeting will begin on Thursday morning with an introduction to Burbank USD and its approach to equity. District leaders will share details about the community's history—including its one-time status as a "sundown town"—and how it has shaped public commitments from the central office and school board to address disparities in opportunities and experiences among students. Against the backdrop of our last meeting in Long Beach, this opening session will also provide a foundation for participants to consider how local context influences strategies and priorities for expanding opportunities and removing barriers to more equitable systems, practices, and cultures.

Next, we will dive deeper into an area of focus from the March meeting: the review and selection of instructional materials to foster inclusivity and engagement for all students. Burbank student and parent guests will describe their experiences with reading materials in their education experience—beginning with discussions about race and language that initiated a process change in the district, then expanding the dialogue to consider the benefits of exposure to new authors and perspectives. Participants will also hear about the dissenting perspectives that can inform and complicate district decisions and explore considerations for navigating the process of change management in school systems.

Building upon reflections about classroom readings, our afternoon conversations will take up the issue of language on school campuses through an examination of hate speech. We are again delighted to welcome a group of Burbank students, who will help us to understand their experiences in schools and share their perspectives about how districts can create more welcoming environments. We will conclude by considering ways in which restorative practices can promote healing and understanding among members of a school community.

To create space for networking, collective relaxation, and additional conversation, we will continue our tradition of ending the day with a group dinner at the hilltop restaurant Castaway.

Day 2: On Friday morning, we will seek your input and guidance on the strategic direction of the Collaborative. Members of the California education community continue to navigate a period of transition, and we want to be sure that we position the Collaborative to leverage our unique strengths as a group. Building on the discussion that took place at our last meeting in Long Beach, we hope to turn to all of you for your reflections and insights about our path forward.

Following our opening discussion on the second day, we will return to our focus on equity with attention to the role of teachers. Classroom educators are instrumental in bringing a district's equity commitments to life, and professional development can be a critical vehicle for cultivating the skills and mindsets needed to promote learning while honoring and respecting every student. A panel of Burbank teachers will share their experiences with equity-focused professional development, followed by reactions and discussions in small groups.

After lunch, we will conclude our deliberations by considering ways in which state policies and support structures can support effective professional learning at the local level.

### **Preparation and Dropbox**

You should find all the information you need for the meeting at a Dropbox link you will receive via email, including a set of readings that will provide important background and context for our deliberations in Burbank. The reading materials are also available on the Collaborative website at <https://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting47>. **On June 10, you will receive an email with the subset of priority pre-meeting readings attached. We strongly encourage you to read this subset of materials prior to the meeting.**

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please do not hesitate to contact Mary Louise at 916-286-8804 or [mlbaez@air.org](mailto:mlbaez@air.org). If you have any other questions, please email me ([jknudson@air.org](mailto:jknudson@air.org)) or reach out by phone or text at 650-924-0373. I look forward to seeing you all later this month!

Sincerely,



Joel Knudson  
Chair, California Collaborative on District Reform  
Principal Researcher, American Institutes for Research