

**FOSTERING COHERENCE ACROSS THE STATE, BOARD, CENTRAL  
OFFICE, AND SCHOOL LEVELS:  
INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT IN SAN JOSÉ**

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27 AND TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28  
SAN JOSÉ UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
855 LENZEN AVENUE  
SAN JOSÉ, CA

MEETING AGENDA

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DAY I: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27

- 8:30 am      **Breakfast.** Light breakfast will be available in the lobby outside the board room.
- 9:00 am      **Convene Meeting.** Joel Knudson will convene the meeting with opening remarks, introductions, and an overview of the agenda. Superintendent Nancy Albarrán will welcome the group to San José Unified School District (SJUSD).

**SESSION I**

***Exploring the San José Conditions for Systemic Improvement***

Efforts to promote a focus on teaching and learning may be more likely to take hold when the systems and structures within a district are aligned with a shared vision. An orientation to SJUSD will include its efforts to achieve financial stability, cohesive governance, collaborative labor-management relationships, and supports for teachers.

*Session Purpose.* Build participant understanding of the San Jose context, including its history, its journey toward organizational stability, and the factors that shape the district's ability to foster coherence in instructional improvement.

- 9:45 am      **Update from Sacramento City Unified School District.** Superintendent Jorge Aguilar will share an update on efforts to support high-quality instruction districtwide since the Collaborative met in Sacramento in November 2022.
- 9:55 am      **Opening Presentation.** Nancy Albarrán will provide an overview of SJUSD, including its history, its strengths, and its current areas of focus. An opportunity for questions and answers will follow.
- 10:30 am     **Break.**

## SESSION II

### *Pursuing Coherence Through Effective Governance*

School boards play an instrumental role in setting and maintaining priorities for a district. However, because they are composed of elected officials who are directly accountable to the public and who increasingly absorb (or even amplify) the pressures of a polarized political environment, school boards can struggle to establish and commit to coherence in the district's work. This session will provide opportunities to learn about promising practices in local governance and engage in collective problem-solving about common challenges shared across districts.

*Session Purposes:* Share promising practices with respect to fostering coherence through board management. Consider solutions to key challenges related to governance.

- 10:45 am      **Panel Discussion.** The session will begin with an exploration of promising practices in two districts. Superintendents and board members from SJUSD and Napa Valley Unified School District will share insights and approaches from their efforts to ensure alignment in their work together.
- 11:40 am      **Consultancies.** Participants will break into three small groups to address key challenges related to local governance unfolding in specific districts.
- 12:40 pm      **Lunch.**
- 1:30 pm      **Consultancy Report Out.** The presenting district representatives for each consultancy will briefly summarize the problem of practice they posed to their group and share their main takeaways from the discussion.

## SESSION III

### *Enabling Coherence at the Site Level*

Despite strong foundations in several areas hypothesized to foster system improvement, SJUSD has not achieved the desired level of progress in key student outcomes. In contrast to the district's orientation in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic—in which employees throughout the organization united around a clear vision for operational steps to prioritize health and safety—a comparable level of urgency, commitment, and clarity around classroom instruction has been more elusive. This session will examine the experience of site-based educators to understand the messages and supports they receive, the priorities that guide their work, and opportunities for strengthening an organization-wide movement toward instructional excellence.

*Session Purposes:* Understand the experiences of principals and teachers in processing and integrating district initiatives into their work. Explore opportunities to strengthen clarity and commitment at the site level toward high-quality instruction.

- 1:50 pm      **Overview of SJUSD Problem of Practice.** Despite strong organizational foundations with respect to systems, relationships, and practices, SJUSD has not yet seen these capacities translate into desired student outcomes. District leaders will set the stage for ongoing

discussion by sharing their perspectives about potential gaps between SJUSD's aspirations for excellence in teaching and learning and current practice.

- 2:15 pm      **Teacher Panel.** A panel of teachers will share their experiences with pursuing high-quality instruction in SJUSD. Remarks will address the priorities, supports, pressures, and messages that support or detract from the work of teachers at school sites.
- 2:50 pm      **Principal Panel.** Building on insights shared by SJUSD teachers, a panel of principals will share their experiences with pursuing high-quality instruction in the district. Discussion will address the messages and supports that principles receive from the district as well as those they provide to school staff to promote coherence at the school site.
- 3:35 pm      **Break.**
- 3:50 pm      **Small Group Discussion.** Following the panel discussion, participants will break into small groups to explore the kinds of supports needed for teachers to effectively deliver on a districtwide vision for instructional excellence for all students.
- 4:45 pm      **Summary and Reflections on the Day's Discussion.**
- 5:00 pm      **Adjourn for the Day.**
- 6:00 pm      **Reception Followed by Group Dinner** at Scott's Seafood.

## DAY 2: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

8:30 am      **Breakfast.** Light breakfast will be available in the lobby outside the board room.

### SESSION IV

#### *Designing for Coherence in the Central Office*

Successful efforts to establish coherence in district improvement efforts rely on coordination among departments and leaders within the central office. Informed by the perspectives of site-based educators shared in Session III, participants will turn to the role of the central office in bridging the broad vision for district improvement with the work that teachers and leaders do in classrooms and schools. A discussion among district leaders in SJUSD will build on the previous session's exploration of implementation considerations to consider the design of and communication about key programs and initiatives.

*Session Purposes:* Explore current levels of alignment and coordination within the SJUSD central office. Consider opportunities to strengthen these connections in ways that support site-based educators.

9:00 am      **Fishbowl Conversation.** SJUSD district leaders will discuss their reactions to the experiences of site-level educators and explore steps that might improve alignment and communication across different leaders and departments within the district.

### SESSION V

#### *Fostering Coherence Through the Design and Implementation of State Policy*

Approaches to California K-12 education policy have evolved substantially in the past decade, transitioning from a system featuring a wide range of categorical programs to one predicated on local control. To take advantage of a unique influx of financial resources into the state budget and address persistent gaps in student learning, however, state policymakers have established a series of new initiatives, funding streams, and accompanying reporting requirements. The meeting's final session will enable participants to consider the development and implementation of state policy that enables coherence in improvement efforts at the local level.

*Session Purposes:* Explore the appropriate balance of tight and loose expectations for K-12 education at the state level. Develop recommendations for state policy and local practice that best foster coherence in local improvement efforts.

9:45 am      **Student Debate.** To address challenges of fostering coherence through state policy, members of the Leland High School debate team will explore the appropriate level of state guidance and direction by posing arguments in favor of one of the following perspectives:

- In a state where public schools have not made sufficient progress in improving student outcomes—especially for historically underserved students—policies that create programs and incentives are needed to ensure that school districts prioritize promising strategies, meet standards of quality, and address student needs.
- In a state where an overwhelming set of programs and accompanying requirements can overwhelm educators and result in fragmentation of improvement efforts,

school districts need the freedom to choose strategies that meet their local needs and enable them to maintain coherence and focus in their approaches.

- 10:50 am     **Break.**
- 11:05 am     **Role-Alike Small Group Discussion.** Building on insights from the student debate, participants will engage with meeting participants in similar roles to consider how they can best foster coherence through their input into and reactions to state policy.
- 11:40 pm     **Jigsaw Conversations.** Participants will reorganize into mixed groups composed of a range of stakeholders. Each group will generate specific recommendations for both districts and state policy actors to foster greater coherence in improvement efforts.
- 12:10 pm     **Lunch.**
- 1:00 pm      **Report Out.** Participants will return to the full group to share their recommendations for district leaders and state policymakers. Full group conversation will ensue.
- 1:45 pm      **Summary and Reflection on the Day's Discussion.**
- 2:00 pm      **Adjourn Meeting.**