

April 21, 2023

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

We are excited to see you at our upcoming meeting on May 3-4 in Santa Ana. In the face of continuing pressures and priorities from inside and outside our school systems that threaten to fragment and distract improvement efforts, we plan to deepen our year-long focus on systemic coherence. This time, we will consider a graduate profile as an anchor for strategies designed to build educator capacity and improve teaching and learning. The upcoming convening is also an opportunity, however, to step back and examine the evolving world for which schools need to prepare young people to thrive. Over the course of our time together, we will explore ideas about the future of education and how school systems can best adapt to and prepare for changes in the learning environment and the broader world in which we live. We extend our thanks to Jerry Almendarez and his team in Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) for sharing their work with us and pushing our thinking in these important discussions.

Meeting Overview

Day 1: The meeting will begin on Wednesday morning with an opportunity to reflect on the future of K-12 education. An overview of current and upcoming changes in the technological, environmental, and geopolitical landscape will help to frame the priorities for student learning and academic preparation. A discussion among meeting participants will then examine the implications for how school and school systems operate to promote student success.

Following this high-level introduction, we will turn to district efforts to orient their work around goals for student learning. In SAUSD, a graduate profile informed by community input articulates a vision for the knowledge, skills, and mindsets of the students who successfully navigate their K-12 education experience. District leaders will share the motivation for developing this profile, what it includes, and how it can serve as a north star that guides all other improvement efforts.

Although the SAUSD graduate profile has helped to establish a shared direction for the district, the early stages of implementing the profile have revealed the need to strengthen shared understanding about what it means and entails. Through a series of listening sessions, district leaders are seeking to clarify and respond to the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents. Participants from these listening sessions will join us to share their experiences with the activity and the insights that have emerged from them. We will follow these reflections by modeling a short listening session with a subset of district leaders that seeks to connect the dots between the big picture conversation that opened the meeting and the insights that emerge about the Santa Ana context.

Next, we will turn to matters of leadership development. In SAUSD, leaders at the central office and at school sites are instrumental to achieve the aspirations articulated in the graduate profile. District administrators will describe their efforts to build the capacity of school principals. We will then hear from principals themselves through a panel discussion that explores the supports and challenges that shape work at school sites.

Keeping with tradition, we will wrap up our day with an opportunity for networking, collective relaxation, and additional conversation at a group dinner at Antonello Ristorante.

Day 2: On Thursday morning, we will continue our discussion about leadership by addressing some specific problems of practice in the SAUSD context. Building on insights generated through the principal panel on the previous afternoon, small group consultancies will enable participants to provide feedback on key issues related to supporting and building the capacity of principals.

We will conclude the meeting with a session that returns our focus to the future. Building on our discussions about the roles of school principals, we will consider the mindsets and behaviors needed to lead in an environment of change and uncertainty. Informed by our initial discussions about the future of K-12 education and motivated by priorities around leadership development, an introduction to strategic foresight will frame a conversation about how best to prepare our educators and school systems for tomorrow and the years ahead.

Finally, given social media's notable influence on the interpersonal interactions and learning approaches of students and parents, we will consider ways in which districts can take advantage of this reality to promote better understanding and foster coherence. An orientation to SAUSD's brand ambassador approach, followed by an exploration of different districts' social media presence, will offer a foundation to explore strengths and opportunities for improvement in this arena.

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 collective learning in Santa Ana. The reading materials are also available on the Collaborative website at <https://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting50>. **On April 21, 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. If you have any other questions, please email me (jknudson@air.org) or reach out by phone or text at 650-924-0373. I look forward to seeing you all next month!

Sincerely,



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