

STRENGTHENING FAMILY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHALLENGING TIMES: COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN GARDEN GROVE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19 AND THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20
GARDEN GROVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
10331 STANFORD AVENUE
GARDEN GROVE, CA

MEETING AGENDA

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

- 8:30 am **Breakfast.** Light breakfast will be available in the staff development room.
- 9:00 am **Convene Meeting.** Joel Knudson will convene the meeting with opening remarks, introductions, and an overview of the agenda. Gabriela Mafi will welcome the group to Garden Grove Unified School District.
- 9:40 am **Update from Sanger Unified School District.** Superintendent Dennis Wiechmann will share an update on developments in his district since the Collaborative met there in May 2024.

SESSION I

Attending to Conditions for Learning and Whole-Child Development

Garden Grove has a long history of strong systems and structures, effective classroom practice, and growth in student progress toward mastery of academic content standards. As it continues the ongoing process of reflection and improvement, the district has intensified its attention on the system supports and student skills needed for students to be ready to learn, and for schools to be ready for students. Community schools grant funding has provided valuable resources and tools for the district to address a broad range of student and family needs and create the conditions for all members of the district community to thrive. This opening session will introduce participants to the Garden Grove context, identify the outcomes toward which the district is targeting its efforts, and briefly explore ways in which a community schools approach offers promise in achieving those outcomes.

Session Purpose: Orient participants to the Garden Grove context, the outcomes that merit attention when addressing whole-child needs, and ways in which community schools can address those needs.

- 9:50 am **Garden Grove Context and Background.** Garden Grove district leaders will provide contextual information about the district and the motivation for embracing a community schools approach.
- 10:20 am **Vehicles for Promoting Whole-Child Outcomes.** Participants will explore the kind of outcomes that are important to achieve and track to enable students to be successful. We will then consider ways in which community schools might help districts make progress toward those outcomes.
- 11:15 am **Break.**

SESSION II

Understanding Family Assets and Needs in a Time of Uncertainty

The context in which vulnerable students and families navigate their K-12 experience is as challenging as any time in recent memory: The goal of preparation for postsecondary success remains at the center of a school district's work, but that mission is complicated by factors that include the ongoing economic, academic, and social-emotional impacts of COVID-19 and upcoming changes to federal immigration policy and enforcement. This session will explore the experiences of parents and other family members in the district community, including the nature of their relationship with the school system and the dynamics that shape interactions with teachers and administrators.

Session Purposes: Foster participants' understanding of family needs and ways in which districts and schools can help to address them.

- 11:30 am **Perspectives of Garden Grove Parents.** Garden Grove parents will speak about their experiences with the district and in the community to build a shared understanding of community assets and needs, especially in the current political context.
- 12:30 pm **Lunch.**

SESSION III

Ensuring Safety and Belonging for Immigrant Families and Students

One of the most basic responsibilities for school systems to ensure that students are ready to learn is ensuring their physical safety and creating a sense of belonging for them and their families. One of the biggest changes anticipated with the new federal administration, the development and enforcement of federal immigration policy, could impact that sense of safety and belonging. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Plyler v. Doe* establishes students' rights to a free public education regardless of immigration status. Nevertheless, threats of deportation for undocumented family members deeply affect student lives outside of school and dramatically shape their readiness to learn in a formal schooling context. This session will explore the ways in which federal approaches to immigration affect the work of schools and strategies that districts can employ to best serve their students.

Session Purposes: Explore strategies for ensuring a sense of safety and belonging for all students, especially immigrant students and families whose circumstances may change in response to the federal policy environment.

- 1:30 pm **Attention to Student and Family Needs in the Current Political Context.** Participants will explore the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for school districts to best navigate changes in approaches to undocumented students and family members.
- 2:00 pm **District Leader Fishbowl.** Leaders from multiple districts will share strategies they are employing to navigate the current policy environment, the rationale behind those approaches, and persistent challenges they continue to navigate.
- 2:30 pm **Small Group Discussion.** Participants will convene in small groups to examine ways in which districts can best create a safe and welcoming environment for students and families.
- 3:00 pm **Break.**

SESSION IV

Understanding Student Assets and Needs in a Time of Uncertainty

The same challenges that shape parents' experiences with the K-12 education system also define students' interactions with their school environment. For some students, stereotypes and stigmas perpetuated by peers and even educators can further undermine confidence and feelings of self-efficacy. Meanwhile, many students with undocumented family members have the responsibility of acting as intermediaries between families and schools while also navigating their own school experience and the uncertainties of the current political environment. Opportunities for learning and advocacy can help students build pride in themselves and their communities and develop the skills needed to succeed in their classes, schools, homes, and communities.

Session Purposes: Foster participants' understanding of student needs and ways in which districts can help to address them.

- 3:15 pm **Perspectives of Garden Grove Students.** Having considered the broader environment in which districts are operating and the perspectives of parents about their connections to the school system, we will turn to a panel of Garden Grove high school students who can share insights about their classroom experiences, the dynamics they navigate in and out of school, and ways in which the district might better support them.
- 4:00 pm **Small Group Discussion.** Participants will convene in small groups to examine ways in which districts can best understand student experiences, provide opportunities to build on their strengths, and design supports to address their needs.
- 4:45 pm **Summary and Reflection on the Day's Discussion.**
- 5:00 pm **Adjourn for the Day.**
- 6:00 pm **Reception Followed by Dinner** at Brodard Chateau, 9100 Trask Avenue in Garden Grove.

DAY 2: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20

8:30 am **Breakfast.** Light breakfast will be available in the staff development room.

SESSION V

Building Educator and System Capacity for Promoting Student and Family Engagement Through Community Schools

Meeting the full range of students' physical, social, and emotional health needs demands both system capacity and knowledge, skills, and time from educators that may extend above and beyond their traditional responsibilities. Positions like a community schools coach at each site and a TOSA assigned to manage the effort at a district level, structures like the district's five family resource centers, and support from the Community Schools Learning Exchange are vital to the plans in GGUSD. Meanwhile, teachers and administrators also need the skillsets and mindsets to understand and respond to the strengths and needs of the families they serve. This session will explore capacity-building needs to meet the promises of family engagement within a community schools approach.

Session Purposes: Identify the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to engage respectfully and productively with families. Explore strategies for building this capacity within and across schools.

- 9:00 am **Perspectives of Site-Level Community School Leaders.** Principals and community schools coaches will share insights into successes and challenges experienced through the first year of implementation.
- 9:50 am **Small group Discussion.** Participants will convene in small groups to explore the promising approaches and challenges associated with strengthening connections with families and students at the site level.
- 10:45 am **Break.**
- 11:00 am **District-Level Structures and Supports for Community Schools.** Participants will hear perspectives from central office leaders to explore ways in which districts can promote quality, coherence, and sustainability in community schools efforts.
- 12:00 pm **Lunch.**

SESSION VI

Planning for Sustainability

State community schools funding provides vital financial resources that enable school and district staff to embrace new kinds of partnerships and supports; yet grant funding will expire. Meanwhile, literature on maximizing the impact of improvement efforts emphasizes attention to multiple dimensions of scale, including depth, spread, shift, and sustainability. This final session will examine ways in which districts can embrace and sustain their community schools work beyond the lifespan of state-level financial support.

Session Purposes: Consider strategies for embedding the engagement efforts supported through community schools funding into the ongoing work of school districts.

- 1:00 pm **Ownership and Sustainability of Community Schools Efforts.** Using the framework from Cynthia Coburn’s “Rethinking Scale: Moving Beyond Numbers to Deep and Lasting Change,” participants will consider ways in which districts can ensure that family engagement efforts and other strategies that are part of a community schools approach thrive beyond the current window of state grant funding.
- 1:45 pm **Summary and Reflection on the Day’s Discussion.**
- 2:00 pm **Adjourn Meeting.**