

April 27, 2016

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform on May 12-13 in San José Unified School District (SJUSD). Many thanks to the whole SJUSD team for offering to host the meeting and for their willingness to share their work as we explore district efforts build and leverage human capital systems in the service of student learning.

This meeting expands on a theme that has run through multiple Collaborative meetings and publications over the past few years: how to design human capital systems that will attract, retain, support, and deploy high quality teachers to maximize learning opportunities and improve outcomes for all students. The meeting takes on particular relevance at this time because of the evolving contexts in both San José and across the state. With respect to San José, our discussions will enable us to explore some key strategies and impending decisions in real time as SJUSD engages in the ongoing improvement process we first learned about during our last visit to the district in January 2013. With respect to other districts and the state, we will consider policy options in light of the recent appellate court reversal of the lower court decision in the Vergara lawsuit and in light of the constrained flexibility afforded to districts by the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the topic of our November meeting. As LCFF directs additional monies to traditionally underserved students, it raises important questions about how best to allocate a broad range of resources (including teachers and professional development opportunities) to meet equity and general improvement goals. In this meeting, *Ensuring Equitable Access to High Quality Teaching: Human Capital in San José*, we will tackle issues of quality and equity both as they unfold in San José and as they confront all California districts.

Meeting Overview

Day 1: The meeting will begin Thursday morning with Superintendent Nancy Albarrán situating SJUSD's efforts to maximize teacher quality within the economic and professional context of the district and its surrounding community. She will outline some of the district's key accomplishments toward this goal, as well as some of the ongoing challenges and current directions. We will explore several of these challenges over the course of the meeting, beginning with that of building a strong professional culture rooted in a commitment to quality teaching for all students. To better attract and retain high quality teachers in a competitive workforce, SJUSD is looking to develop a culture that recognizes and celebrates excellence among the district's teachers and other staff. An educator panel consisting of district and school administrators, teacher leaders, and classified staff will help us understand the existing district culture and the kinds of cultural changes that are in process. Following this discussion, we will break into small groups to explore the opportunities and implications of the changing culture for different actors within the school system.

After lunch, we will turn to some of the key issues emerging from SJUSD's efforts to improve quality and equity at the school level through the implementation of two new teacher roles negotiated in the district's most recent collective bargaining agreement. These new positions—model teacher and master teacher—are designed not only to recognize excellence among the teaching force, but also to leverage the district's highest quality teachers to lead improvement efforts at the school level, particularly in the highest poverty, lowest performing schools. The roles themselves have not yet been fully defined or filled, and the district is seeking feedback on its plans to move forward with this

strategy. After a brief presentation on the district's implementation progress to date, which has been informed through a partnership with Bain & Company, a combination of small group and full group discussion will enable us to dig into some of the key design challenges that district leaders are confronting. Among these will be the implications at the school level and in the community of allocating excellent teachers in these new roles to schools in need.

The first day will conclude with an opportunity to explore human capital issues in other district contexts. Fresno, Oakland, and San Bernardino Unified School Districts will present problems of practices in small group consultations to gather feedback about challenges in their communities. As usual, we will end the day with an opportunity for networking and collective relaxation over dinner, this time at Scott's Seafood in San José.

Day 2: On Friday morning, we will turn our discussion to issues of human capital policy and politics. One critical venue for developing and implementing policy exists at the local level through interactions between the central office and the teachers union. To help us consider this local policy dynamic, we will begin with a discussion between Albarrán and San José Teachers Association (SJTA) President Jennifer Thomas. This conversation will shed light on the ways in which the central office and SJTA have worked together as partners on teacher quality issues. It will also illuminate some of the push-back the district has experienced from the state in trying to implement key components of its most recent collectively bargained agreement.

The policy conversation will continue by addressing some of the opportunities and constraints that exist at the state level, especially as they relate to teacher tenure and dismissal. The recent appeals court decision to overturn the initial Vergara ruling shapes the possibilities for local educators to develop new approaches to navigating these issues. We will therefore begin by considering the immediate steps that local leaders can take to enhance the quality of their teaching force without changes in state law. We will also discuss a possible long-term agenda for administrators and teachers to pursue policy change. This conversation will allow participants to consider whether a constituency of support exists for such an effort and what steps a coalition of districts and other organizations might take to map a path forward.

Readings

As usual, all readings and reference materials for the sessions are available in multiple formats. If you requested a hard copy of the binder, all of the materials will be included there; the cover sheet behind each tab identifies a subset of the readings as priority readings that we suggest you read before the meeting. **For your convenience, on Thursday, April 28, you will also receive an email with this same set of pre-meeting readings attached. We strongly encourage you to read these materials prior to the meeting,** as they have been incorporated into our group activities and provide important background information on the topics we will discuss. Also for your convenience, all of the meeting materials are available on the Collaborative website at <http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting30> and via DropBox at a link you will receive via email.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Dawn Smith at 650.843.8239 or dcsmith@air.org. If have any other questions, please email me (joday@air.org) or give me a call at 202.262.4987. I look forward to seeing you all next month!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O'Day
Chair, California Collaborative on District Reform, and
Institute Fellow, American Institutes for Research