

# THE CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE ON DISTRICT REFORM

March 24, 2006

Dear Participants of the California Collaborative on District Reform,

Our first meeting of the Collaborative will be taking place on April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, and we anticipate a thought-provoking and informative dialogue with nearly all members of the Collaborative in attendance. We are very pleased that you will be joining us.

This kick-off meeting of the Collaborative is particularly important as it will lay the foundation for our work together over the next two years. Our goal is to identify the central issues and challenges facing California districts as they strive to improve instruction, increase student learning, and address gaps in achievement and other outcomes among student groups. Over the course of the meeting, we will also discuss relevant aspects of the California state policy context and the use of research and other evidence to inform district practice. We will end with a discussion of the future agenda, goals, and products for the Collaborative.

A key principle in our work over the next two years will be to ground the Collaborative's deliberations in the concrete realities of district practice. One strategy for doing so is to focus each of the meetings (after this first one) on a particular problem of practice in California districts. Additionally, we plan to embed the discussions in the context of a specific district, to visit that district collectively and to use what we learn there as a starting off point for the broader dialogue.

Consistent with this approach, we will begin the meeting on Thursday morning with a visit to the Hayward Unified School District (HUSD), where Collaborative member Dale Vigil assumed the superintendency last spring. Dr. Vigil and his HUSD colleagues have graciously offered to host the Collaborative, providing participants an opportunity to meet with district administrators leading their improvement efforts and to visit one of three schools in the district: Tyrrell Elementary School, Martin Luther King Middle School, and Tennyson High School. In this binder, you will find information regarding Hayward Unified and each of these schools. We encourage you to review these materials prior to the visit.

The meeting will commence at the Hayward Unified office at 24411 Amador Street, in Hayward at 8:45 A.M. on April 6<sup>th</sup>. Participants may meet at the hotel at 8:00 to travel together to the district office or drive there on their own. Directions are included in the binder, along with parking information.

On Thursday afternoon, we will convene at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation at 2121 Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park. Lunch will be served at 12:30 and we will begin at 1:00 with a debrief of the Hayward visit and a more extensive discussion of key issues facing urban districts across the state. We will then move to a discussion of the state context in California, including current and impending conditions and policy initiatives. Dinner will be provided at the California Café, beginning with cocktails at 5:30.



Friday morning we will reconvene at Hewlett to delve into the challenges of using research and other evidence to inform district practice. Our final session will then look forward to the subsequent meetings of the group to establish potential topics, visits, goals, and products. We plan to adjourn by noon on Friday.

In this binder, we have included several articles, briefs, and reports relevant to the discussions planned for Thursday and Friday. In addition to the materials on Hayward, we have included readings on district improvement, on the California state context, and on using research and evidence to inform practice. Each section of the binder corresponds to one of the meeting sessions; a full listing of the articles precedes the readings themselves. Please note that several of the pieces were researched and written by members and guests of the Collaborative. At the meeting, everyone will also receive a copy of the book *California's K-12 Public Schools: How Are They Doing?* Published by the RAND Corporation, this report provides a comprehensive overview of the state of education in California.

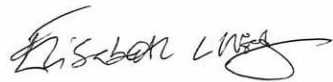
In the first sections of this binder, you will find additional meeting logistics, including a detailed agenda, a participant roster, and short biographies of all the Collaborative participants. If you have any additional questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Catherine Bitter and the California Collaborative staff at 650.843.8255.

Again, thank you for joining us. We hope you will find this an informative and productive meeting. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O'Day, Chair  
American Institutes for Research



Elisabeth Woody, Associate Chair  
Policy Analysis for California Education