

June 13, 2013

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We are looking forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform on June 27 and 28 in San Francisco. Many thanks to Richard Carranza and his team for putting forward a set of provocative topics from which we can all learn, as well as to our colleague, Arun Ramanathan for contributing to the conceptualization and planning of this meeting.

The meeting will give us all an opportunity to explore special education policy and practice, past, present and future in the context of improving teaching and learning for all students. Over the course of the two days, we will review the roots of special education policy and practice, examine current practice and some of the challenges that have emerged (reality), and explore directions for the future (reboot). The agenda draws on several recurring themes from prior meetings including those in San Jose and Oakland, which were anchored in the struggle for educational equity and civil rights. San Francisco Unified will bring that struggle up to date by sharing their own efforts to address disproportionality issues in their schools. The meeting will also revisit themes of 21st Century learning from our San Jose meeting by presenting cutting edge paradigms for teaching a wide range of learners in inclusive settings, including Universal Design for Learning(UDL). Finally, we have once again included a policy session, which will be focused on special education finance and Common Core implementation as they relate to special education.

We also continue to incorporate a variety of session formats, including smaller working groups and sessions that rely on consultancy and fishbowl formats. Our hope is that all Collaborative members will feel they have opportunities to contribute to the meeting dialogue. We are also continuing a practice we began in April by sending you a much smaller set of advance readings via email in addition to this binder of additional resources to read and use as your time permits. This email should arrive on or shortly after June 14.

Meeting Overview:

Day 1: We will begin Thursday morning with a short presentation about the history of special education as a civil rights issue. After this presentation, we will split into smaller groups to participate in an activity using redacted Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to better understand the process of identifying, evaluating and placing students into special education. **The email mentioned above will contain detailed information about this activity and will include the IEPs themselves.**

Thursday afternoon we will turn our attention to SFUSD, beginning with a panel presentation from Richard Carranza and his team. The panelists will share information about the district, its performance over time, and its current challenges with disproportionality in special education and disciplinary suspensions. After this initial presentation, Richard will present a specific problem of practice on which he and his team are seeking input from the group. We will use a consultancy protocol to provide feedback to the SFUSD team and to launch a larger group discussion.

We will end the day with a presentation on the neuropsychology of student learning from Collaborative guest, David Rose of CAST at Harvard University. David will lead a lively and interactive discussion about advances in neuropsychology that can help teach us about how children learn and the implications for school/classroom design and teaching. This presentation will provide the research basis for Friday's discussion on future directions.

As is our usual practice, after a day of thought-provoking dialogue, we will gather for more informal conversation and relaxation at a group reception and dinner at Park Tavern.

Day 2: Friday morning David Rose will return to lead a session on the application of his research on student learning in the classroom. David will introduce an approach to instruction called Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which focuses on improving the learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, in an inclusive classroom setting. After David shares his vision of UDL and its relationship to existing strategies for differentiated instruction, a fishbowl discussion will allow district leaders to reflect on the classroom-based strategies presented throughout the meeting and to talk about their implications for their own districts and for system-level reform more broadly. This fishbowl discussion will be followed by a full group discussion that integrates district-level case studies of UDL implementation.

We will conclude the meeting with reflections and discussion about the policy implications of the meeting's proceedings. Of particular focus will be the implications for special education finance and Common Core implementation.

Readings:

As usual, all readings and reference materials for the sessions are included in this binder. **As noted above, you will also receive an email with a smaller subset of preparatory readings attached.** We have instituted this practice in response to your requests for a more targeted and easily digestible set of pre-meeting materials. **We strongly encourage you to review this sub-set of readings prior to the meeting as they have been incorporated into our group activities.**

For your convenience, all of the meeting materials are also available on the Collaborative website:

<http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting22> and via DropBox:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d13vtr552izwncr/KdkxYiQUI6>. A small number of CDs that contain the briefing binder materials will also be available at the meeting if necessary.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Suzanne Claussen at 650.843.8192 or sclaussen@air.org. If you have any other questions, please email me (joday@air.org) or give me a call (202.262.4987). I look forward to seeing you all later this month!

Sincerely,



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