

July 1, 2014

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 July 15 and 16 in Garden Grove Unified School District (GGUSD). We thank Gabriela Mafi and her team for their hospitality in hosting the meeting and for their willingness to share their work as we use the frame of “professional capital” to begin our foray into capacity building for Common Core implementation.

This meeting, entitled *Professional Capital in a Time of Transition: Moving to the Common Core in Garden Grove*, will pick up on many of the themes from our exploration of Common Core implementation in Sacramento last November while setting the stage for subsequent convenings focused on different aspects of capacity building. It will also give us a chance to return to a district that has been so influential for many of our members and that has established a strong foundation of success for its students and teachers. Gabriela suggested the professional capital framework as a way to help focus the discussions and to understand the problem of practice she will present to the group.

Meeting Overview

Day 1: The meeting will begin Tuesday morning with an exploration of this framework, developed by Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan, and then move into Gabriela’s discussion of the challenges Garden Grove teachers, principals, and district leaders are facing as they transition to Common Core instruction. We have included two very short excerpts from the *Professional Capital* book that seemed particularly relevant for framing the conversation. Please read these excerpts before the morning’s discussion.

As part of the morning conversation, we will also have a chance to talk with Sandy Thorstenson, superintendent of Whittier Union School District and newly appointed superintendent representative on the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE). Sandy is able to join us for a short while on Tuesday and is seeking input on how the CCEE should go about its work. Given the relevance of the CCEE for statewide efforts to build professional capital, we are taking advantage of Sandy’s presence to squeeze in this discussion.

After lunch, we will focus on the challenges the transition to the Common Core presents for GGUSD teachers in terms of their own motivation and self-efficacy. In part, these challenges stem from the very success that Garden Grove has built over the years and from the sense of professional pride and confidence that this success has engendered in GGUSD instructional staff. Now those same successful teachers are being asked to adjust their instructional practices so they more fully align with the Common Core. But for Garden Grove teachers, the way forward is less clear and more risky than previous practice, a situation that has led to considerable anxiety. This anxiety, particularly at the elementary school level, is compounded by uncertainty about the practices for which teachers will be held accountable as the district gives teachers greater professional discretion at the same time it also strives to maintain the high quality of instruction that has been its hallmark.

Principals, of course, have an important role to play in motivating and support teachers’ change process—and in ensuring continued quality. After delving into the challenges teachers face, we will

have the opportunity to talk with several Garden Grove principals about the “decisional capital” they must employ as they “push, nudge, or pull” teachers to new practices (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). As background for the afternoon’s discussions, we have included two chapters on understanding and motivating teacher will from Robyn Jackson’s *Never Underestimate Your Teachers*; the chapters are short and quick—please read them before the afternoon discussion.

We will end the day with a group dinner at Brodard Chateau, a local Vietnamese restaurant that has long been a favorite of our colleagues in Garden Grove.

Day 2: On Wednesday morning, we will turn our attention to systemic efforts at the district and state levels to build professional capital for Common Core transition. Gabriela and her team in Garden Grove will first outline what they are doing from the central office to support their teachers and principals as they navigate the change process, and we will have an opportunity to explore how their strategies compare with those in other districts. Then we will consider how we might leverage more statewide efforts, including cross-district collaborations, professional networks, stakeholder coalitions, the inchoate CCEE, and a revised role for the California Department of Education to support district transitions. We will also have the opportunity to hear from our colleagues in Los Angeles about the recent *Vergara v. California* decision and discuss and its implications for state and district policy.

Readings

We are experimenting with a much smaller binder and limited set of readings this time. In addition to the short excerpts from *Professional Capital* and *Never Underestimate Your Teachers*, which we would like you to read before the meeting, we have included a very small number of additional background materials for you to look over as your time allows. One of these is the report that Joel Knudson wrote on GGUSD’s human capital system, which we included with a previous binder as well. As we have for each of our more recent meetings, we will email the most important subset of materials to you in a day or two.

For your convenience, all of the meeting materials are also available on the Collaborative website at <http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting25> 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 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
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