

THE CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE ON DISTRICT REFORM

February 14, 2008

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

Our sixth convening of the California Collaborative on District Reform will take place on February 28th and 29th in Redwood City. Once again, we look forward to bringing the group together for a productive and informative discussion.

Our November meeting in Sacramento City Unified was the first in a series of meetings focused on district strategies to address the needs of *adolescent* English learners (ELs). In this meeting, we discussed the instructional content necessary to prepare students for the transition to work and college, including subject matter content, language, and other skills (e.g., knowledge of the university system, study skills). We also had the opportunity to hear directly from EL students about their experiences in high school and college, as well as from counselors, teachers, and administrators both about their strategies and challenges in meeting their students' diverse social, academic, and language needs. One important theme that emerged from these discussions was the importance of reaching out beyond the school walls to incorporate resources, relationships, and services in students' communities and families. This theme was not a completely new one in Collaborative meetings – indeed, Warren Simmons and others have urged the group before to expand our notion of “the district” to include the surrounding community. In our meeting this month, we will have the opportunity to do just that.

Broadly put, our topic will be: *Community-School Partnerships for Youth Success: Meeting the Needs of Adolescent English Learners*. Our discussions will be set in the context of the Redwood City 2020 Initiative in Redwood City, CA. This initiative has been successful in bringing together school districts, local service providers (e.g., county health services), and community-based organizations (e.g., the Boys and Girls Club) to develop and implement a shared agenda for youth success. The John W. Gardner Center at Stanford University has been a key player in this initiative through the administration of youth programs and development of a database that merges academic data with data from service providers and community organizations. We are pleased to be joined by representatives from Redwood City 2020 and the Gardner Center to discuss this important topic.

Two threads will extend throughout the meeting:

Coordination of Service Delivery. Throughout all sessions we will address ways in which a range of services, including education, health, and social services, among others, can be coordinated to address the multiple and interconnected needs of students. We will discuss the benefits of this coordination for students, families, schools, and districts. We will also discuss the differences between simple coordination and systemic collaboration at both the citywide policy and the school-neighborhood levels and the challenges to establishing such collaborations systemwide.

The Building of Social Capital – among organizations and individuals. During this meeting we will also focus on the building of social capital – long-term relationships and connections among individuals, schools, families, and community organizations to address student needs and enable collective problem-solving. We will examine social capital from the policy level (e.g., how Redwood City 2020 develops a shared policy agenda among the partnering organizations) to



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the student level (i.e., ways in which this initiative results in long-term relationships and connections to benefit students).

In this briefing book we have included background information on the Redwood City 2020 initiative and the Gardner Center's work, as well as literature related to these two threads. Below, I outline the general schedule for the two days.

Thursday schedule

On the first day we will convene promptly at 8:30 am in the San Mateo Credit Union conference room (see the logistics summary in the front cover of the binder). In our first session we will hear from Patricia Brown, Executive Director of the Redwood City 2020 Initiative, about the systemic collaborations they have developed to foster youth success in Redwood City. We will also have a panel discussion with several stakeholders from the initiative to learn about the unique nature of collaboration in Redwood City and the ways in which it serves the many needs of students and their families.

In the afternoon (Session II), we will focus on the collaborations as experienced by students, families, and schools. We will hear from a panel of staff at one of the local "community schools" in Redwood City. In both sessions we will have the opportunity to discuss the implications of this work for other districts and communities in California.

We look forward to having you join us at the end of the day for cocktails and dinner at Mistral Restaurant and Bar (see logistics summary).

Friday schedule

On Friday, we will reconvene at 8:30 am at the San Mateo Credit Union conference room. In the morning we will start off with a few brief updates on the additional projects and working groups that have grown out of the Collaborative's work.

We will then turn to Craig Baker of the John W. Gardner Center to learn about the Gardner Center's Youth Data Archive. We will learn how census data and data from education, health, social services and community group participation are being collected and combined to answer important research and policy questions related to student needs and success. The afternoon session on Friday will then provide an opportunity to discuss implications of our discussions for members' work, both in policy and practice.

Our meeting will adjourn at 3 pm on Friday, February 29th. If you have any additional questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Suzanne Claussen and the California Collaborative staff at 650.843.8192.

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

Sincerely,



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