

THE CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE ON DISTRICT REFORM

February 23, 2009

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

We look forward to seeing you at our ninth convening of the California Collaborative on District Reform, to be held on March 9-10 in Fresno Unified School District. The topic of this meeting is *An Agenda for Equity and Access: Structuring Success for All Students*. Thank you to Mike Hanson and his leadership team in Fresno Unified for hosting this meeting.

In this meeting, we will have an opportunity to dig deeply into an issue that has emerged as a common thread throughout our conversations about supporting the success of English learners – *equity and access*. Building on prior discussions, we will get down to “brass tacks” in this meeting by identifying very specific and concrete opportunities to learn (or not learn) at the secondary level and fleshing out targeted actions for increasing equity. To organize our discussions we will use a framework suggested by Mike Hanson and laid out in the book *Updraft/Downdraft – Secondary Schools in the Crosswinds of Reform* by Marilyn Crawford and Eleanor Dougherty. We will examine data on the institutional structures and conditions (“artifacts” of opportunity to learn) that lead to an “updraft” of some students toward graduation and college and a “downdraft” of others toward dropping out. We plan to be very concrete and specific in identifying data sources, tools, systems, and strategies that can be used to identify and address sources of inequity and unequal access.

March 8, Sunday afternoon (For those of you who can join us early)

Understanding the challenges that Fresno Unified faces in their work requires an understanding of the unique economic and social context of the Central Valley. Therefore, for this meeting we are pleased to offer an exciting opportunity for members to learn more about the Central Valley context in which Fresno sits. For those of you who can arrive by 2:30 on Sunday, we will be organizing a short tour of the communities in and around Fresno. Following the tour, Jorge Aguilar, newly appointed Associate Superintendent for Equity and Access at Fresno Unified School District, has generously offered to host us at his home in Clovis, where we will learn more about the area from David Hosley, director of the Great Valley Center, and possibly from farmer and author David Mas Masumoto.

March 9

On Monday morning we will start by framing the “problem” of equity and access. Fresno Unified’s leadership will provide an overview of the district context, lay out the goals for the meeting, and present student data that define issues of equity and access within the context of Fresno Unified.

In the afternoon, we will take the morning’s discussion to the next level by considering what institutional factors and conditions foster the success of some students and not others at the secondary level. We will ground our discussions using the framework from *Updraft/Downdraft*



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to consider the “artifacts” that indicate differential opportunities to learn among student groups. Our dialogue will also address strategies that can be used to curtail these institutional inequities and increase the number of students who move through the pipeline to graduation.

We will reserve time at the end of the day for updates on recent Collaborative activities and to discuss the future of the Collaborative. Then, the first day will adjourn at 5:00 pm allowing time for participants to return to their hotel rooms and travel together to the restaurant for cocktails and dinner (see logistics summary).

March 10

On Tuesday, we will convene at 8:30 am to deepen our discussion of artifacts in the area of *mathematics*. Specifically, we will discuss ways in which middle school mathematics courses can set students on or off-track for high school graduation and college preparation. We will consider artifacts that can help practitioners determine whether all students are receiving equitable opportunities for success in rigorous mathematics courses. This discussion will build on our previous meeting in Hayward focused on 8th grade algebra, and we will reserve time at the end of the session to discuss the draft brief on this topic.

The meeting will culminate with a consideration of how district-level policy can be developed to foster equity and access in a time of fiscal crisis. We will also consider the upcoming influx of funds from the federal stimulus package and ways in which these funds can be used efficiently and effectively to target equity and access. We will adjourn at 3 pm on Tuesday, March 10th.

In this binder, we have provided you with contextual information on the Central Valley, background information on Fresno Unified’s goals and policies, as well as materials related to specific topics of discussion, such as opportunity to learn indicators, on-track indicators, dropout research and prevention, and middle school mathematics. As in previous binders, priority readings are marked with a double asterisk (**) on the reading lists behind each tab divider.

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, thanks for joining us!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O’Day, Collaborative Chair
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