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March 27, 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 April 11-12 in Oakland. Many thanks to Tony Smith and his team for putting forward a set of provocative topics from which we can all learn, as well as to our colleagues at WestEd for hosting us.

This meeting will give us all an opportunity to explore **Oakland's systemic approach to community schools** in the context of their strategic vision: Each Child College, Career and Community Ready. More specifically we will delve into the district's evolving **school quality review (SQR) process** as an integral component of that approach. Our consideration of these topics will build on several themes from past meetings, including college and career readiness, opportunity gaps, and school indicators. The meeting will also give us an opportunity to deepen our exploration of the relationship between school districts and their surrounding communities. Finally, we have set aside time on April 12 to continue our work on **two critical policy issues**—our on-going dialogue related to Governor Brown's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) (this time with a focus on district accountability and transparency) and our more recent conversations about school accountability in the context of SB 1458 and NCLB.

Once again, in response to member feedback, we have made an effort to streamline the binder of readings and have incorporated a variety of session formats, including smaller working groups and sessions that rely on jigsaw and fishbowl formats. Our hope is that all Collaborative members will feel they have opportunities to contribute to the meeting dialogue.

Meeting Overview:

Day 1: We will begin Thursday morning with a short presentation from Tony Smith about Oakland Unified School District. Tony will situate Oakland's work in the current policy context and give a brief overview of OUSD's strategic plan, including the rationale for focusing on a systems approach to community schools. Tony's presentation will be followed by ample time for group discussion and will help frame the rest of the meeting. From there we will engage with a diverse panel of leaders in the district, each of whom is integral in his or her own way to the implementation of OUSD's community schools work.

Thursday afternoon will be devoted to thinking deeply about school quality in the context of a community schools strategy. First, we will learn about what measuring school quality looks like in OUSD and how the district is approaching the SQR process. We will then break into smaller working groups, with each group examining specific aspects of the SQR process through the lens of a recent school quality review report (West Oakland Middle School). This report will serve as an anchor for more general discussion of the complexities of developing and implementing a comprehensive district-wide quality review process.

The California Collaborative on District Reform (www.cacollaborative.org) joins researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and funders in ongoing, evidence-based dialogue and collaborative activity to improve instruction and student learning for all students in California's urban school systems.

Our small working groups will be followed by a fishbowl conversation with principals and community partners from three Oakland schools. During this session, we will learn about how school stakeholders experience the school quality review process; how they use the information they receive to inform improvement efforts; and how the central office is supporting this work.

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. We will walk to Pican's restaurant from the West Ed offices directly after the meeting.

Day 2: Friday morning we will turn to the challenge of moving a whole district culture, focusing on two specific strategies within the broader community schools district approach. We will begin with a problem of practice posed by OUSD's district leaders: how best to staff and train school quality review teams so that they become a source for leadership development and a support the district's desired cultural shifts. Small groups will explore this problem from several angles and provide specific feedback and suggestions to Tony and his team. This discussion will be followed by a short introduction to the restorative justice practices that OUSD has implemented in response to the disproportionate suspension of African American males across the district. These practices are an integral component of the district's effort to move toward more equitable treatment of and supportive culture for its students.

We will conclude the meeting with our work on the two policy issues outlined above.

Readings:

As usual, the priority readings for the sessions are located directly behind each tab, followed by additional readings for your reference. While all meeting materials are included in the binder, **we have also sent a smaller subset of preparatory readings via email.** We have done so 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/meeting21>. (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 next month!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O'Day, Chair
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