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Saint Mary's to Host California Teachers Summit

By A.K. Carroll



"With Common Core, the big goal is to prepare students to be college and career ready," said Adam Clark, assistant superintendent for the Liberty Union High School District. "Before we can make them ready, though, we have an obligation to teach our students [certain] skills."

Clark is one of five guest speakers who will discuss topics such as social-emotional learning and non-cognitive skills, culturally responsive leadership in a collaborative learning environment, and the universal importance of literacy as part of Better Together, a free teachers' summit that will be held from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. July 31 at the Saint Mary's College Kalmanovitz School of Education. The summit will take place concurrently at 33 locations across California and is expected to involve approximately 20,000 educators.

"This is work I've been doing since day one in

education," said Clark, who received his administrative credential, teaching credential and master's degree from Saint Mary's. A former preschool teacher and middle and high school principal, Clark has run the gamut in the field of education. "[My talk] focuses on what [social-emotional education] is and why it's important for students to learn and for us to teach." Clark will share from his own experience as an administrator and an educator, and will discuss ways in which social-emotional learning can be seamlessly integrated into every day classroom activities.

His presentation will be one of three ED (in the style of TED) talks given by local education experts. The lineup also includes education consultant and former superintendent of the Oak Grove Union School District, Kevin Harrigan, and curriculum coordinator for the San Ramon Unified School District, Kathleen Moore, who will be addressing the topic of universal literacy.

"This has been my focus for the past 30-plus years," said Moore, who did her doctorate on literacy in math education. "I see literacy as a social justice issue. It's at the core of everything we do ... and imperative for us to think about in all the different disciplines that we teach." Moore hopes her talk will inspire collaboration among educators. "One of the focus areas I'm hoping they walk away with is the idea that the structure of school may not change, but we can change the way we approach instruction. [We can] teach students that everything they learn is connected to something else."

The ED talks will vary from site to site. Uniform for the various locations, however, will be telecast keynotes from actress Yvette Nicole Brown and former NFL player-turned-NASA astronaut Leland Melvin.

A frequent guest on the talk show circuit, perhaps best known for her role on NBC's "Community," Brown is a champion of teachers who recently partnered with Comedy Central's Stephen Colbert on an initiative to fund education projects in South Carolina. A former co-chair of the White House task force charged with developing the nation's five-year STEM education plan, Melvin is passionate about equipping students with the skills they need to soar. An athlete, astronaut, scientist, engineer, photographer and musician, he takes stories from his personal life to help inspire the next generation of explorers in their pursuit of science, technology, engineering, art and math. Having served on the International Space Education Board, Melvin is a key candidate for sharing his passion with today's educators.

The event is possible thanks to \$3.5 million in grants and the sponsorship of the Gates Foundation, the New Teacher Center, California State University, and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.

"SMC was selected as a host because of its stellar reputation in teacher preparation," said Michael McAlpin, director of media relations at SMC. "[It] is the only private college in the Bay Area to serve as a host for the gathering."

Better Together has been organized to equip and inspire area educators to take on all of the challenges that come with implementing California state standards while striving for excellence in local classrooms. The summit is targeted at administrators, teachers and teacher candidates working with students in grades PreK-12. Breakout sessions created by teachers for teachers will provide an open forum atmosphere in which educators can share practical and insightful strategies that are currently being implemented in classrooms across California.

"I'm hoping people will be able to find something useful regardless of their particular position or the community in which they serve," said Clark.

As an added incentive to attend, a 0.5 unit continuing education credit will be made available for the reduced cost of \$27.50. Those interested can register online at www.cateacherssummit.com.

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