

**San Diego Education Research Alliance (SanDERA)  
at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD)**

The San Diego Education Research Alliance (SanDERA) is a newly-created partnership between the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) and the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) dedicated to conducting relevant, targeted policy research in order to inform, support, and sustain high-quality educational opportunities for all students in San Diego and beyond. It was established to formalize and focus the longstanding research relationship between the district and university, support the articulation of a shared research agenda linked to the district's strategic goals and initiatives, and provide a structure for conducting ongoing research and sharing findings.

During the ten-year period prior to the creation of SanDERA, a UCSD team based in the Department of Economics worked collaboratively with SDUSD to identify and study timely and relevant policy questions of interest to teachers, administrators, and parents in SDUSD, and also to the statewide and national education research communities. Led by Julian Betts, Professor and Chair of the department, the team has published a series of books, academic papers, research summaries, and briefings exploring the determinants of achievement in the district, the impact of literacy reforms, the multifaceted forms of school choice in San Diego, how the California High School Exit Examination has affected students, and, in ongoing projects, Career and Technical Education (CTE) and the effects of the use of diagnostic testing provided by the Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project.

In May 2010, SanDERA was established as an independent research entity based at UCSD – governed by a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between SDUSD and UCSD that provides clear delineation of function and data security provisions. The structure and function of the SanDERA are based, in part, on similar entities such as the Consortium on Chicago School Research (<http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/content/index.php>) and the Research Alliance for New York City Schools ([http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research\\_alliance](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance)). The research team at UCSD, now under the SanDERA umbrella, continues to be directed by Professor Betts, supported by Mr. Andrew Zau, Senior Statistician, and Dr. Karen Volz Bachofer, former Executive Director of SDUSD's Research and Evaluation Division, who joined UCSD in 2009. Key to SanDERA's success are two SDUSD administrators – Mr. Ron Rode, Executive Director of the Office of Accountability, and Dr. Peter Bell, Director of the Research and Reporting Department. It should be noted that SDUSD maintains an arm's length relationship with UCSD when it comes to study outcomes and publications. That is, the district provides frequent input, including valuable insights that inform research findings and ensure accuracy, but it does not influence conclusions drawn by the researchers.

The UCSD/SDUSD research partnership has benefited from the financial support of numerous entities, including the U.S. Department of Education, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Girard Foundation, the California Academic Partnership Program, and others. PPIC, at which Betts is an Adjunct Fellow and a 2009-10 Bren Fellow, has been particularly supportive – publishing several books and related materials summarizing research findings emanating from the collaborative work.

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## Published work by the UCSD team relating to the SDUSD/UCSD Research Collaboration

### PPIC Books and Reports

- (August 2010), Betts, Julian, Andrew C. Zau, and Cory Koedel, **Lessons in Reading Reform: Finding What Works**, San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.
- (2008), Zau, Andrew C., Julian R. Betts, **Predicting Success, Preventing Failure: An Investigation of the California High School Exit Exam**, San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.
- (2006), Julian R. Betts, Lorien A. Rice, Andrew C. Zau, Y. Emily Tang, and Cory R. Koedel, **Does School Choice Work? Effects on Student Integration and Achievement**, San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.
- (2005), Julian R. Betts, Andrew Zau and Kevin King, **From Blueprint to Reality: San Diego's Education Reforms**, San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.
- (2003), Julian R. Betts, Andrew Zau and Lorien Rice, **Determinants of Student Achievement: New Evidence from San Diego**, San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.

### Refereed Journal Articles and Book Chapters

- (2011), Koedel, Cory and Julian R. Betts, "Does Student Sorting Invalidate Value-Added Models of Teacher Effectiveness? An Extended Analysis of the Rothstein Critique," *Education Finance and Policy*, 6(1), pp.1-17.
- (2010), Koedel, Cory and Julian R. Betts, "Value-Added to What? How a Ceiling in the Testing Instrument Influences Value-Added Estimation," *Education Finance and Policy*, 5(1), pp. 54-81.
- (2010), Julian R. Betts, Y. Emily Tang, and Andrew C. Zau, "Madness in the Method? A Critical Analysis of Popular Methods of Estimating the Effect of Charter Schools on Student Achievement", Chapter 2 in Paul T. Hill and Julian R. Betts (Eds.), **Taking Measure of Charter Schools: Better Assessments, Better Policymaking, Better Schools**, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- (2009), Cory Koedel, Julian R. Betts, Lorien A. Rice, and Andrew C. Zau, "The Integrating and Segregating Effects of School Choice," *Peabody Journal of Education*, (84:2), pp. 110-129.
- (2009), Philip Babcock and Julian R. Betts, "Reduced-Class Distinctions: Effort, Ability, and the Education Production Function," *Journal of Urban Economics* (65), pp. 314-322.
- (2009), Julian R. Betts, "The San Diego Blueprint for Student Success: A Retrospective Overview and Commentary," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, (14:1), pp. 120-129.
- (2007), Julian R. Betts, "California: Does the Golden State Deserve A Gold Star?," Chapter 3 in Frederick M. Hess and Chester E. Finn Jr. (Eds.) **No Remedy Left Behind: Lessons from a Half-Decade of NCLB**, Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, pp. 121-152. (This article draws upon conversations with many school districts including SDUSD.)
- (2005), Julian R. Betts, "The Promise and Challenge of Accountability in Public Schooling," in Frederick M. Hess (Ed.) **Urban School Reform: Lessons from San Diego**, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, pp. 157-176.
- (2005), Andrew Zau and Julian R. Betts, "The Evolution of School Choice," in Frederick M. Hess (Ed.) **Urban School Reform: Lessons from San Diego**, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, pp. 223-241.
- (2004), Julian R. Betts and Anne Danenberg, "San Diego: Do Too Many Cooks Spoil the Broth?," in Frederick Hess and Chester Finn (Eds.), **Leaving No Child Behind? Options for Kids in Failing Schools**, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 213-238.