

## PARTICIPANTS

**Ricardo Cano** covers education for CalMatters, a journalism nonprofit that covers California politics and government. Previously, he covered Arizona’s public schools as the education reporter for the *Arizona Republic* and *azcentral.com*. He was recently named a finalist for the Livingston Award for Young Journalists as well as an Education Writers Association award for data journalism. He is a Fresno State alumnus and attended California public schools.

**Deborah Gonzalez** is director of government affairs at PPIC. She and her staff work to connect PPIC research with policymakers and community leaders. A longtime Capitol staffer, she served as policy and fiscal director for six legislative leaders and worked on a wide variety of issues—including the state budget, education reform, infrastructure funding, and public safety. She holds a law degree from the McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific, and a BA from Claremont McKenna College, where she majored in international relations.

**Kent Kern** is superintendent of schools for the San Juan Unified School District. He is a “home grown” superintendent: after graduating from district schools, he returned as a teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent. Since he assumed his current role in 2014, he has overseen the district’s creation and implementation of its first Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), played an instrumental role in the passage of a \$750 million facilities bond, and championed a number of equity initiatives designed to remove barriers to student access and success.

**Michael Kirst** is professor emeritus of education at Stanford University. He served on the California State Board of Education from 1975 to 1982, and returned to serve as board president from 2011 to 2019. Before he joined the Stanford faculty in 1969, he held several positions in the federal government, including director of program planning for elementary and secondary education in the US Office of Education. He is author of *Political Dynamics of American Education* and coauthor of *From High School to College*. He holds a PhD in political economy and government from Harvard University.

**Julien Lafortune** is a research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, where he specializes in K–12 education. His primary areas of focus include education finance, school capital funding policy, and educational tracking and stratification. He has published research on the impacts of school finance reforms on student achievement in the *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Samantha Tran** is senior managing director of education policy for Children Now. She oversees a comprehensive birth-to-college-and-career education policy agenda, managing policy, advocacy, and communications campaigns on school finance, accountability, and 0–5 early care and education. She is also a strategic advisor on Children Now’s foster youth and health policy work. Before joining Children Now, she was a senior research and policy consultant at the California School Boards Association (CSBA), providing guidance to local governance teams and representing the organization on state and federal policy issues. She holds an MA in education policy from Stanford University and a BA from the University of San Francisco, where she majored in communications.