



OAKLAND UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Community Schools, Thriving Students



# School Portfolio Management: Grade Configuration Change v5

**Life Academy: 6-12  
beginning 2012-13**

**Designing Successful K-8 Schools**  
Richard Graves, AA, Principal, WASC Accredited

**Using Common Metrics**

Metric	From the Survey	From the Literature
4.4	4.4	4.4
4.5	4.5	4.5
4.6	4.6	4.6
4.7	4.7	4.7
4.8	4.8	4.8
4.9	4.9	4.9
5.0	5.0	5.0

**When students move to a middle school, their... to attend a K-8 school, what's more, their act...**

**K-8 Schools May Help School Districts Improve Student Performance at a glance**

**Attempting a Turnaround: Benefits seen putting middle schools into K-8's**

**Stuck**

# Strategy for maximizing assets

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## Grade Configuration Change

*Grade configuration change represents the expanding of a school's grade configuration to serve either grades PK-8, PK-12 or 6-12. Approach would expect each school to grow each grade one year at a time. The proposal expects to analyze annually the educational benefits of the expanded grades and consider the educational benefits of additional grade configuration changes in other school settings. Grade configuration change proposals proposed are intended to expand quality programs.*

# Strategy for maximizing assets

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## Recommendation:

- ***Approval of a grade configuration change to Life Academy to serve students in grades 6 through 12, beginning July 1, 2012.***
- *The school will enroll approximately 75 6<sup>th</sup> grades students that begin in the 2012-13 academic year. Each subsequent year, the school would grow to serve an additional grade level until the 2014-15 academic year when the school would reach capacity serving grades 6 through 12.*
- *The school would operate at the Calvin Simmons campus, co-located with United for Success Academy, which serves grades 6-8. Any facilities modifications proposed in order to accommodate the additional grades served would be funded through facilities funding currently allocated to Life Academy modernization and construction budget.*
- *The school would be designated as an open enrollment school that would not be identified with a specific attendance area, but instead provide equal access to all students within the District interested in enrolling in the school's Science- and Health- focused program.*



# Restructuring Proposals: Grade Configuration Change

## BACKGROUND:



### GRADE CONFIGURATION CHANGES

- **Beginning Fall 2010**, Central administration was contacted by school leaders and/or facilities dept to support specific schools facing urgent facility-related decisions & considering grade configuration changes.
- **Fall 2010**, Central administration hosted site visits to K-8 schools, and engagement events with leaders of local K-8 and 6-12 schools to explore benefits and challenges of these unique grade configurations.
- **Fall & Winter 2010**, Central administration was contacted by additional school leaders and school communities seeking support to explore grade configuration changes.
- **Spring 2011**, Central administration developed preliminary **“Readiness Factors”** to assist in making recommendations to the Superintendent in consideration of possible grade configuration changes.
- **Spring 2011**, to support a systemic approach to evaluating grade configuration change proposals, all school leaders district-wide were invited to submit a Letter of Interest if their school communities were already engaged in meaningful consideration of grade configuration changes, prior to initial recommendations to the Superintendent.
- **Summer 2011**, meetings were held with all leaders proposing grade configuration changes to review Letters of Interest. Letters of Interest that contained challenges not likely to be resolved in the current year were encouraged to participate in a future cycle.
- **Fall 2011**, Board of Education directed Superintendent to develop Restructuring Criteria; among other programmatic priorities such as STEM and high school re-design, grade configuration changes were included within the criteria to provide the opportunity to initiate planning of Expanding School Plan in support of Superintendent and Board decision-making.
- **Fall 2011**, Grade configuration changes are not proposed as an alternative to school closure.

# Restructuring Proposal: Grade Configuration Change Planning

## Expanding the grade configuration of a school to K-8 or 6-12.

**Howley, C.** (2002) Grade Span Configurations. *The School Administrator (Web Edition)*. Available: [www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2002\\_03/howley.htm](http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2002_03/howley.htm).

**Wihry, D.F., Coladarci, T., & Meadow, C.** (1992). Grade Span and Eighth-Grade Academic Achievement: Evidence from a Predominantly Rural State. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 8(2), 58-70.

**Referenced in:** "Grade Span Configurations: Essentials on education data and analysis from research authority AEL". (March 2005). District Administration (Web Edition). [www.districtadministration.com](http://www.districtadministration.com).

**Offenberg, R.** (2001). The Efficacy of Philadelphia's K-to-8 Schools Compared to Middle Grade Schools. *Middle School Journal*, 32(4), 23-29.

**Moore, D.W.** (1984). *Impact of School Grade-Organization Patterns on Seventh and Eight Grade Students in K-8 and Junior High Schools*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

**Simmons, R.G., & Blythe, D.A.** (1987). *Moving into Adolescence*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

**Alspaugh, J.W.** (1998). *Achievement Loss Associated with the Transition to Middle School and High School*. *Journal of Educational Research*, 92(1), 20-25.

**Designing Successful K-8 Schools**  
History of K-8 Schools  
The K-8 grade configuration structure was a mainstay of North American education until the late 20th Century. It is the preferred middle school grade configuration of 6-8 and 7-8 schools. In the 1990's, the middle school grade configuration of 6-8 and 7-8 schools has been replaced by K-8 schools. In the 1990's, the middle school grade configuration of 6-8 and 7-8 schools has been replaced by K-8 schools. Middle schools have begun to criticize the academic performance of K-8 schools. Middle schools have begun to criticize the academic performance of K-8 schools.

**K-8 Schools May Help School Districts Improve Student Performance**  
at a glance  
In recent years, some school districts in other states have reorganized their schools. These districts have moved away from using separate middle schools for students in grades six through eight to K-8 schools. The primary reason cited for these moves is the performance of students in middle school. Other reasons include: parent dissatisfaction, and efforts to reduce school size, high absenteeism, discipline problems, and dropout rates.

**Attempting a Turnaround: Benefits seen putting middle schools into K-8's**  
In response to a legislative information request, this report provides information on middle school configurations. Specifically, we address the questions below:  
• To what extent have school districts in other states shifted from the traditional middle school configuration to K-8 schools?  
• Why have school districts changed their grade configurations?  
• What evidence of success exists for K-8 schools?  
• What can Florida learn from the experiences of other states?

**Stuck**  
Historically, most schools in the U.S. were divided between elementary schools that served grades K to 5, and high schools that served students in grades 6 to 12. In some high schools, serving middle school students, were introduced in the 1950s and grew in number until the mid-1970s, when they began to be replaced with middle schools that served grades 6-8. The shift toward separating middle grades students was intended to focus on the unique characteristics and needs of early adolescents.

# 2011-12 GRADE CONFIGURATION CHANGE PLANNING PROCESS

## Part A

**September 23, 2011:**

Submit:  
Initial proposal for school expansion  
Feasibility Analysis (summary version)  
Evidence of **at least one** staff/community engagement regarding expansion

**September 27, 2011:**

Establish a site-based study team to:  
Explore the benefits and implications of school expansion  
Develop a thorough Feasibility Analysis  
Host community engagement event(s)

**October 25, 2011:**

Conduct **one or more** community engagement event(s) to share initial ideas for school expansion and gather signatures of support  
Complete Feasibility Analysis

**November, 2011:**

Presentation to Superintendent on **key benefits and trade-offs** of proposed expansion for **Life Academy, Greenleaf Elementary School, Sankofa Academy**

**December, 2011:**

Presentation to Superintendent on **key benefits and trade-offs** of proposed expansion for **La Escuelita, Madison**

## Expanding School Design Team



**Not Later than December 14, 2011**

**Decision by Board of Education regarding expansions.**

**Part B**

# Restructuring Proposal: Grade Configuration Change Planning

## SUMMARY:

### **Grade Configuration Change School Design Team will develop Expanding School Plans**

#### **PLAN - PART A: DUE December 1, 2011**

- Framing of compelling rationale for expansion
- Description of how the current program/s meet goals of the Strategic Plan
- Identify value-add components of program/s
- Identify Key Practices
- Complete Feasibility Analysis (*staffing, enrollment, facilities*)

**DECEMBER 14, 2011 Decision-Making re: Grade Configuration for 2012 and 2013**  
(*November 16, 2011 re: Schools requiring new student recruitment beginning 2012*)

#### **PLAN - PART B: *If approved* DUE March 13, 2012**

- Expanding-up program plan
- Roll-out of implementation plan
- Operationalize program, i.e. staffing, budget, enrollment
- Identify central supports needed
- Identify structural supports needed



# Evaluation Criteria

## Grade Configuration Change: Evaluation Criteria

### CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Schools pursuing grade level expansion will be evaluated for candidacy in the following *Readiness Factors*, listed in order of significance:

<b>STEP 1</b>	<b>Is there a Compelling Rationale for Grade Level Expansion</b>
<b>STEP 2</b>	<b>Is there Demonstrated Staff and Family Interest in Grade Level Expansion</b>
<b>STEP 3</b>	<b>Is there Demonstrated Leadership and Staff Capacity to Support Grade Level Expansion Planning and Implementation</b>
<b>STEP 4</b>	<b>What are the results of the Analysis of Facility Capacity to Support Grade Level Expansion</b>
<b>STEP 5</b>	<b>What are the results of the Analysis of Demographics and Enrollment Implications</b>





# Restructuring Proposal: Grade Configuration Change Planning

## Why Expand Grade Configurations?

- As the District develops Full-Service Community Schools, students would benefit from sustained relationships and the ability to receive timely intervention and supports that endure through various developmental stages.
- The District loses significant numbers of students during the transitions from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school. The district hopes to increase the available options for families to consider how best to support their children as they progress from one grade to the next.
- Currently nine K-8 charter schools and five 6-12 charter schools operate in Oakland. This is more than the total number of K-5 and 9-12 charter schools in Oakland. These are popular school options for families and families have frequently indicated that they choose these schools specifically to access their grade unique configurations.
- Our existing K-8 and 6-12 schools are incredibly popular and host long waiting lists.

# Restructuring Proposal: Grade Configuration Change Planning

## What may be the impact on school facilities?

Each school facility is being evaluated in the following four categories.

- **Category A:** Existing capacity to accommodate current grade configuration
- **Category B:** Existing capacity to accommodate new grade configuration
- **Category C:** Facility upgrades/ modifications needed to accommodate core academic program – specifically the courses needed to successfully complete the program
- **Category D:** Facility upgrades/ modifications needed to accommodate full program needs, including amenities that support extra-curricular activities, electives, and other supports and services.



2011-12 Academic Year

**Sixth Graders to Scientists:  
A Future Built on Health**

# Industry and Community Demand

- Approximately 1700 students in neighborhood for only 800 middle school seats.
- 851 students leave the district after 5th grade.
- 117,400 Education and Health Services Jobs in Oakland.
- Kaiser is the largest employer in East Bay with 22,500.
- Health Care jobs are the highest paid industry sector in the US.
- There are locally 4 major hospitals as well as many outpatient clinics and private practices.
- Many of the knowledge gaps that prevent students from successfully entering the field are foundational skills learned in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade.

# Mission Statement

Life Academy seeks to **dramatically interrupt patterns of injustice and inequity** for **underserved communities in Oakland**. Through *transformative learning experiences* focused on **Health, Medicine, and Bioscience**, students are engaged in learning and inspired to acquire the **skills, knowledge, and habits** necessary to succeed in **college** and **careers** in the medical field.

- Reflection
- Inquiry and Investigation
- Use of Evidence
- Logical Reasoning and Analysis
- Perspective

- State Content Standards
- Academic Vocabulary
- Test taking skills
- Literacy Gaps
- Mathematical Skill Gaps

Habits of Mind

Content Standards  
&  
Foundational Skills

Vision of Self

Habits of Life

Habits of Work

- Love of Learning
- Integrity
- Fearlessness
- Empathy

- Focus and Precision
- Organization
- Revision
- Cooperation
- Effort



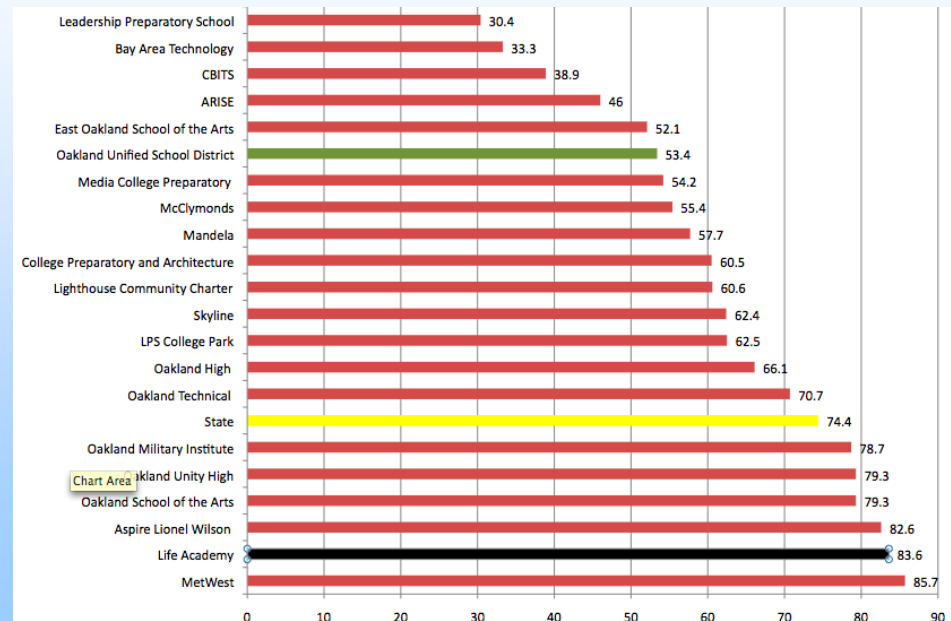
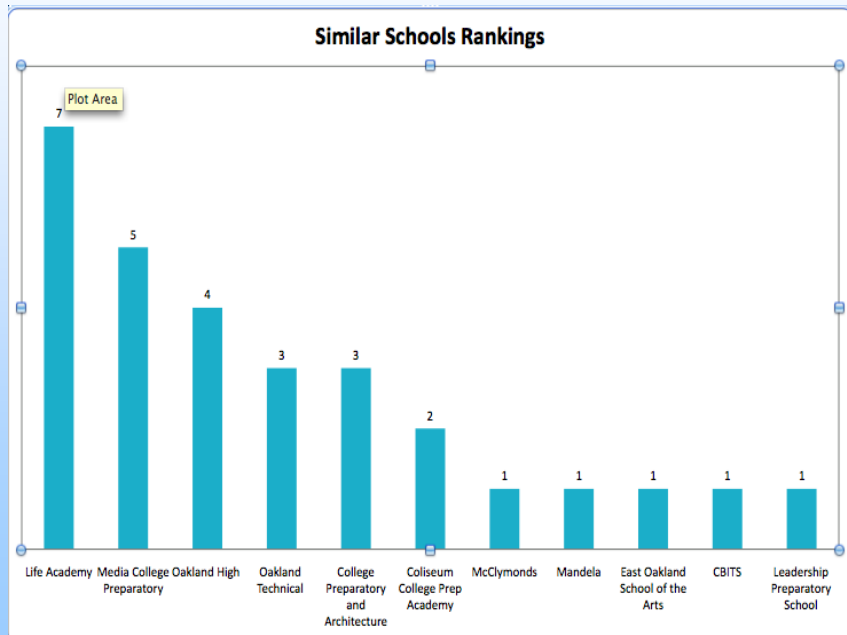
# Life Set the Mark High in 2010

- **Award:** Model of Community Partnership in move to Full Service Community Schools.
- **Award:** Lowest Chronic Absent Rate for High School
- **Award:** Greatest Improvement for proficient and advanced African-American Students on the ELA CST
- **Awarded:** Greatest Improvement for Latino students on the CST math.
- Highest Rated Afterschool Program
- 2<sup>nd</sup> ConnectEd Certified Linked Learning Site in the state.
- 6 Year WASC Accreditation

# Demonstrated Compelling Rationale: Life Academy

## Academic Performance:

- Life Academy is in the top quarter of high schools in OUSD with the highest API scores in 2010-11
- Life Academy has the second-highest reduction in the performance gap.
- Life Academy has the highest similar schools ranking of all OUSD high schools
- Life Academy has the 2<sup>nd</sup>-highest graduation rate among charter and district high schools in Oakland at 84%.





# Vision and Opportunity for Life Academy Students



- Culture is grounded in Habits of Life Academy
- Support students with community science internships to meet Industry Demand
- Relevant project-based learning
- Commitment to youth development with Advisory structure and Extended Day Program



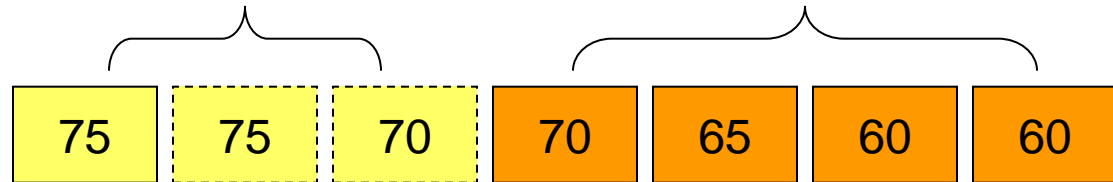
# Fiscal Reality

- Life Academy has determined that it would need increase enrollment to a total enrollment of approx. 400+/- students to remain fiscally viable moving forward.
- 2111 International Blvd. could not sustain a school of that size, thus relocating to Calvin Simmons was a fiscally responsible decision.
- Becoming a 400 student high school was not determined to be feasible based on the school's program components, including on our likely inability to acquire 200 internships for students.
- The school leadership believes that from a fiscal standpoint, expanding to a school 400+/- within a 6-12 configuration was the best option to continue to achieve the school's vision.

## Grade Configuration Growth: Life Academy 6-12

6-8<sup>th</sup> grades

9-12<sup>th</sup> grades



### Enrollment Growth:

2012-13: **75** 6<sup>th</sup> graders

Grow one grade each year.

2014-15: serving approximately **200-225** 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

As of 2011-12: **1272 students** in grade 6-8 living in the Simmons attendance area (district/charter)

*Open enrollment status and a broad-based strategy to inform families*

*District-wide will diminish impact on surrounding middle school enrollment.*

*Additionally, some district-wide loss in enrollment from 5-6<sup>th</sup> grade may be mitigated.*

- Longer relationship with students and families.
- Cascading student leadership high → middle → elementary
- Support skill development in core content areas.
- Get students in internships sooner.
- Integrated project based learning 6-8

# **Enrollment Proposal: Life Academy 6-12**

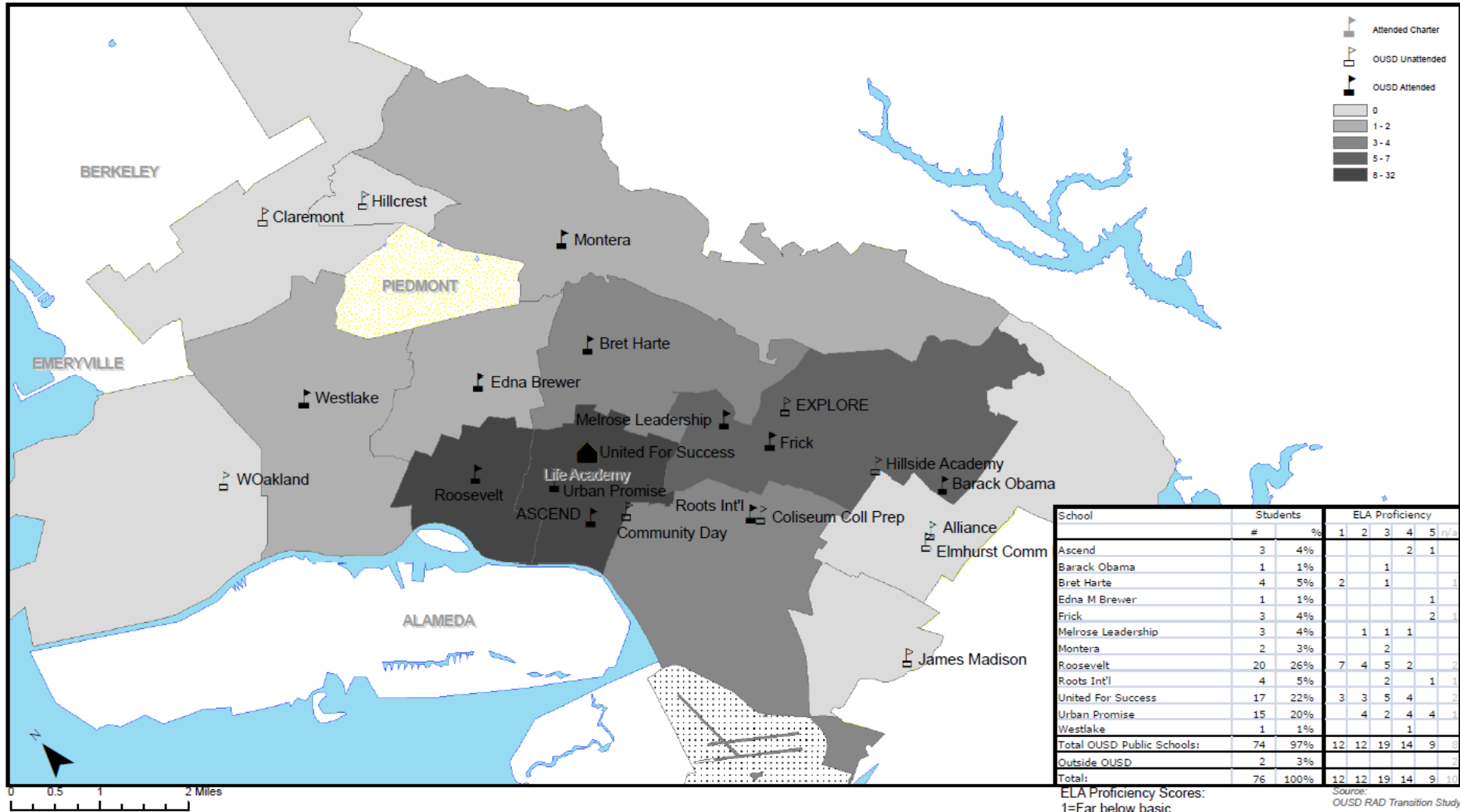
## **Open Enrollment Options for all families throughout the District**

Currently alternative education programs, including MetWest High School, offer equal access to all students regardless of their attendance area. This provides all families the opportunity to consider unique program options that may be a specific fit for their goals for their children.

### **RATIONALE:**

1. Provides opportunity to specifically recruit under-represented students in the health and sciences including girls and African American students.
2. Provides opportunity to increase and maintain the over-all racial and ethnic diversity of the student body.
3. Reduces the direct impact on the local middle school options that continue to predominantly serve students within the local attendance area.

## 2009-2010 to 2010-2011 Middle School to High School Transition: Which middle schools did the Life Academy 9th graders come from?



Source: OUSD RAD Transition Study  
 ELA Proficiency Scores:  
 1=Far below basic  
 2=Below basic  
 3=Basic  
 4=Proficient  
 5=Advanced

Note: Charter schools do not operate with an "attendance boundary" and may draw equally from throughout Oakland.

## **Rationale: Life Academy**

### **Staff and Family Interest in Grade Level Expansion:**

- Staff and community engagements regarding expansion have been on-going since the 2010-11 school year
- The leader expresses great interest in the benefits of expanding grade levels and the increased access students and families will have to the Life program
- Current staff have expressed interest in teaching in the middle school program, and there are identified staff members who have specific work time dedicated to learning about middle school programming and to planning the 6-12 expansion at Life
- Family and community express an interest in participating in the program beginning in middle school
- In 2011-12, Life Academy had a waiting list with 88 students and was the most requested small high school.

## **Rationale: Life Academy**

### **Facilities Capacity:**

- Life Academy shares the Calvin Simmons campus with United for Success Academy, which is a middle school program
- Currently, there is sufficient space for Life's high school program
- SPM and Life Academy staff have engaged in regular ongoing dialog with the leadership at UFSA, and with the Transformation office that supervises UFSA, to identify quality space to accommodate both school programs in the context of an expansion.
- To date, desired classroom space has been identified, as well as other facilities improvements needed to provide enough space for the expanded grade configuration, as well as to improve the current condition of the facilities for the benefit of both schools operating on the campus.
- Grant and bond monies currently allocated to Life Academy will be used to support all proposed modifications needed to accommodate the expanded grades program.

# A New Calvin Simmons

United for Success Academy and  
Life Academy can both benefit



# Street View from 35<sup>th</sup> Ave. Calvin Simmons Campus



# New Science Building & other modernization upgrades



OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Calvin Simmons**  
**School Modernization**

2101 35TH AVENUE, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94601



[www.lca-architects.com](http://www.lca-architects.com)

# Strategy for maximizing assets

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## Recommendation:

- ***Approval of a grade configuration change to Life Academy to serve students in grades 6 through 12, beginning July 1, 2012.***
- *The school will enroll approximately 75 6<sup>th</sup> grades students that begin in the 2012-13 academic year. Each subsequent year, the school would grow to serve an additional grade level until the 2014-15 academic year when the school would reach capacity serving grades 6 through 12.*
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