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Board Cover Memorandum

To Board of Education

From Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Superintendent
Sonali Murarka, Director, Office of Charter Schools
Guadalupe Nuño, Community Liaison, Office of Charter Schools

Meeting Date February 24, 2022

Subject BP 0420.4 Community Engagement Feedback

Ask of the Board Review and discussion

Background Charter Committee members Director Gonzales and Director Thompson sponsored Community Engagement sessions on February 2, 2022 and February 16, 2022 to engage community members around proposed updates to Board Policy 0420.4. Office of Charter Schools staff captured feedback from the engagements and are presenting this feedback to the Charter Matters Committee for discussion.

Discussion The central questions to consider are what edits would the Charter Matters Committee members like to make to the board policy based on the feedback received during the engagements.

Fiscal Impact N/A

Attachment(s)

- Presentation
- Appendix I: Notes containing feedback from the Community Engagement sessions held on 2/2/22 and 2/16/22.

Board Policy Community Engagement

Note Catcher
Sponsor: Director Thompson
Date: 2/16/2022

Group 1

	What resonates?	Questions/concerns?	What's missing?
Overall language	<p>Preference for option 1: more straightforward and streamlined.</p> <p>Preference for option 2: all of our public schools are under a common umbrella of shared values</p> <p>Preference for option 1: option 2 isn't measurable (e.g. Joy and culturally responsiveness)</p> <p>Like in option 2 the fact that it defines standards, but preference for option 1 because more streamlined. Last sentence in option 2 should be included in option 1.</p> <p>Like option 2: would like to see us find ways to measure equity, integrity, joy, etc.</p> <p>Opportunity for district to qualify core values and determine what they mean.</p> <p>Preference for option 1 because streamlined, but the one core value that both district and charter share is putting students first.</p> <p>Suggestion on option 1: "provide high quality</p>		<p>Language to reflect that quality and equity in both District and charter.</p> <p>Charter schools are public schools</p> <p>Language should apply to both district and charter.</p>

	<p>authorization *and support**</p> <p>Student outcomes should be included more and defined.</p> <p>Need to center students rather than divisive politics.</p>		
New Petition Language			
Renewal Language			

Group 2

	What resonates?	Questions/concerns?	What's missing?
Overall language	<p>Overall I feel like it (the proposed language) does not have language for parents.</p> <p>I feel like I needed more time with the language. I feel like this is written for a doctor.</p>	<p>I just want to say that I love my child's school (Community School for Creative Education) . My child is receiving a great education and I would like the school to stay in the neighborhood where it is.</p>	
New Petition Language			
Renewal Language			

Group 3:

	What resonates?	Questions/concerns?	What's missing?

Overall language	General language seems anti choice (anti charter)	Equity is important and also choice, it is skewed	It's not inclusive language
New Petition Language	The number of constraints seems like a lot	The word public for public charter schools, instead just say charters	Nothing about student centered in the first or second option
Renewal Language		There seems to be a high bar and charters being held to a higher standard	Working together and joint efforts

Group 3 breakout notes:

Participant: I don't like the omission of the word[s] public school. it smacks of more anti-charter sentiment. They are trying to siphon away kids....but Charter school students make up a third of the population. OUSD still has the other two-thirds....

I feel that Option 2 [in the proposed Introductory language] is attempting to put extra constraints or other policies against charter schools. Also, "to uphold OUSD core values" – OUSD hasn't done the greatest thing for black kids...so if they aren't doing the job, how can they state this?

Participant: ...What is missing in the language is the togetherness. For several decades we have been pitting ourselves against each other. We need to acknowledge that we [charter schools] are public schools. It is such a dichotomy: us and against them and instead we need more inclusiveness in the language.

Participant: – as a parent I don't care if it's public or charter. I know I pay taxes for quality schools. So I don't care and children need both charter and [district] schools...

Notes from "Large Group Share Out":

Participant: Our breakout group ran out of time when reviewing the proposed charter renewal proposed language.

But the term "in exchange" doesn't set a neutral tone – I urge the committee to rewrite in order to continue operating with stability and autonomy the charter must meet the requirement of the US state department and the California department of Ed.

What autonomy? What are we talking about? High levels of accountability? How does this differ from traditional public schools?

Participant: ...a lot of hesitancy and it's hard to understand the wording. Its like reading something from the doctors office. I'm about making our families understand and it's important that the communication is clear.

Participant: I want to underline how key it is to put in the language of the word "public" and want to emphasize the need of including accountability as accountability from the state and not have accountability be something locally defined.

Participant: I think one of the things we want to add in the introduction is regarding the student centered and student outcomes. There is nothing in that first option or even in the second option about this.

Participant: [translated] schools should be held accountable for equality of education – the family are expecting this

Participant: [translated] I am in agreement, the most important thing is that San Antonio – we need assurances about our school [building]...we need stability, good stability.

Participant: [translated] We advocate for charters schools more, there seems to be a higher graduation rate but those that are still in the regular [district] schools should still have the same opportunities – equity above all – everything should even.

Participant: From CSCE where the teachers care a lot. They are early to help the students. They are very friendly and respectful. And also Ida Overman is a great person – I feel that the teachers at my school, especially Ida Oberman, are strongly advocating for the future of our kids.

Participant: I wanted to voice a concern around the political hamster wheel...I have a child that went to 6 preschools....I'm missing the spirit of the long-term solution. How do we focus on this?

Participant: I like option number 2 [of Introductory language]. I feel that option number 2 is more proper and has more inclusive language.

Participant: I just want to echo a lot of the sentiment that has been shared tonight – a lot of the language seems to pit the sides against each other....and already charter schools are held to a much higher standard...

...Black and brown students need the type of transforming education they deserve...

Oakland doesn't do the best job it should...it [the district] slants the situation in a very negative way towards choice, especially with words and things like "all applicable, state, district and federal policies..."

It's like they want to outlaw charter schools and everything they are doing...The charter committee is two-thirds anti-charter. When we see language it's crazy...It's knee-capping and handcuffing – however you want to say it.

The whole thing [proposed policy] needs to be thrown in the trash. The way it's written is so anti-choice it's not even funny.

Participant: ...in the language we are using – we short change Oakland unified public schools...We cut it down to just “charter”...instead of charter school. It's a “public charter school...”

Participant: Currently a principal at a district school and I've worked in a charter school as a teacher and a coach. Reading both options, one of the key things is leveling the playing field whether it's public or charter...The playing field is not fair...

...Every week I meet with a principal at a charter school. As I principal, I have no assistant principal I have 300 kids, and I [the district school principal] have one community school manager who is not credentialed, so he can't evaluate staff

Yet down the street, the charter school principal - they don't have a Mod-Severe program, so this all adds a layer of complexity and it's challenging to manage. There is a reality at the school site level that the staffing is very different at charter schools than district schools.

Participant: Thank you for parents in this space...There is an opportunity here for OUSD leadership to name that they want to be an awesome authorizer of charter schools. There are 16 thousand [students] in charter schools.

Anonymized Chat Comments (2/16):

- I agree! language should be amended to read "public charter schools" rather than "charter schools."
- That is a good point, both CDE and Federal Department of Education state that charter schools are Public schools.
- So much of the way this is written is very dangerous for charter schools
- to my break out group: language should be equal high standards as the standards to which we hold our district schools
- ..not just 'should be held to high standards' It's a system and we are a community of district and charter schools aiming to serve the students at our common center

- agreed. these edits seem political, and negatively targeting charter schools and not honoring family choice.
- A theme in our breakout is that there should be togetherness, and not a traditional schools vs charter schools. We are jointly serving the same students who all deserve high quality education, and both are public schools.
- most important SA derives education, and good education but if having bills this year or not
- really, the accountability for SPED is the same in charter schools?
- yes. all charters and districts are subject to regular state and federal review
- My daughter's IEP was not honored at a district school. I feel the frustration. We have to come together.
- Keeping decisions closer to students allows better service. Many charters are able to do this. I have also been a district and charter educator and seen the disparities.
- what plan are you referring to? Also, 4 charter schools of 42 closed in Oakland last year. There is a lot of struggle all over.
- Mr. [anonymized] just testified why core values for both types of schools are so important; and those values can be evaluated.
- Parents just want quality education. No matter if it's district and charter. No failing schools. Our children need better options and more resources so they can be successful.
- OUSD needs to do better for all of Oakland's children, regardless of district or charter!!
- Suggested sentence to replace the proposed one for charter renewals: In order to continue operating with flexibility and autonomy, a public charter school must meet the charter renewal accountability standards defined by the State of California and the U.S. Department of Education.
- I'm not for shutting down any school. I know that no charter school or public school is free of issues... totally agree, but why allow a plan that bulldozed public education for our most vulnerable BIPOC ? especially when it will not mean closing charter schools?
- The fact is there are too many schools in Oakland at the end of the day. Many of the schools facing closure are the lowest performing for Black/Brown students. ANY school

that is doing more harm than good should be closed. District or Charter, and many charter schools have already been closed the past 3 years.

- I hear you [anonymized], however that has little to do with charter autonomy and a lot about how your school is being funded by the district that funds you. A good example is that charter schools that are in the OUSD SELPA pay more than 2 Million to have access to mild and moderate programs. These school receive less funding than traditional school districts

**Board Policy Community Engagement
 Note Catcher
 Sponsor: Director Gonzales
 Date: 2/2/2022**

Group 1:

	What resonates?	Questions/concerns?	What's missing?
Overall language	<p>Ensuring quality and equity for all Oakland students</p> <p>The 2nd option is the 1st option, more specified - preference for second option but would prefer more detail (too vague)</p>	<p>How do we plan to use the language to hold schools accountable?</p> <p>How will the language affect charters and district run schools in the future?</p>	<p>I believe any non OUSD public school is high quality. For example Lighthouse</p>
New Petition Language			
Renewal Language		<p>What is being measured for renewal?</p> <p>Can the measurements be more specific - what does it mean to put students first, for example? We need a shared definition and be less vague.</p> <p>How does one know what</p>	

		<p>tier a school is in?</p> <p>On slide 3, one criterion for renewal should be whether a charter school offers anything that's not available in a public school — the question of duplication. If a charter just duplicates what's already available in public schools there's not really any reason for it to continue.</p>	
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Group 2:

	What resonates?	Questions/concerns?	What's missing?
Overall language		<p>1.If the board adopts this language, what is the plan to implement the core values?</p> <p>2.Is there a time frame related to this change? (Will the language change with each new group of board members?)</p>	
New Petition Language			
Renewal Language			

Other notes:

- Leader from School for Creative Education had a parent speak about why she loves the school and why it should have a permanent place.

Group 3:

	What resonates?	Questions/concerns?	What's missing?

Overall language		Believe in democratic processes Want to ensure we don't enter into a totalitarian era. Want process to be neutral to whether we have pro-charter or anti-charter folks on the Board.	Believe in quality schools. Would be good to clarify that charter schools are non-profit orgs, we don't have for-profit ones here Should preface that we're not competing for kids, they're all Oakland kids.
New Petition Language		Are we holding charters to a much higher standard? Seems like we're playing charters against the public. Serve the interests of the <i>entire</i> community in which the school proposes to locate – don't see a history of that	
Renewal Language		What are the high levels of accountability, what are the conditions for this? Seconding the above. Would be helpful to unpack this. What does "significant degree of autonomy" mean for charters?	

Other notes:

- On process – would like to have charter school staff partner with the Office of Charter Schools on the language
- In the chat: "As a parent of students attending both a district school and charter school, I am deeply concerned about this proposed language and policy. Charter renewal is an example of how schools like Lodestar are asked to prove themselves in ways district schools do not (and that the teachers' union does not support for their own school but tries to impose on charter schools). The policy language is rife with politics and personalities against charter schools and does not put our students success at the center."

Group 4:

	What resonates?	Questions/concerns?	What's missing?
Intro	Option 2 - more applicable		

	<p>to holding schools accountable to OUSD values (more definition)</p> <p>Option 2 - as a charter school alumni and now parent, very unclear where they can go if they are feeling ignored by staff of these schools (likes the specificity)</p> <p>Adding a safety aspect into the language (something that covers physicality)</p>		
<p>New Petition Language</p>	<p>Concern around the “not seeking new petitions” language</p> <p>Hate the fact that when they come to the board, they want to add pressure</p> <p>Idea of stepping away from the policy and rewriting it - really problematic</p> <p>Authorization is the power and the leveraging piece - can’t drive policy if you don’t have good governance practices</p> <p>Want to add face to face with community into this (it’s not right for board members to make policy based on their beliefs - this is backward)</p> <p>First sentence - negative connotation - want to add collaboration; don’t like the sentence about the working to make a new district program (does this language limit us?)</p>		

	<p>If it's coming out negatively - is the balance not being utilized</p> <p>"Need a sentence that honors the family choice for the schools that families make"</p>		
Renewal Language	<p>I had a question about the last slide: when it refers to holding charters to the highest level of accountability, are there clauses that outline the marks of accountability? If not, I would suggest that the more specific it can be, the best. Vagueness does not bode well with guidelines.</p>		

Notes from Breakout Group 4:

	What resonates?	Questions/concerns?	What's missing?
Overall language	<p>Change is not necessarily a bad thing...focus should be on quality and students</p>	<p>What does the word "autonomy" mean? How is it being used?</p> <p>What's the objective here?</p>	<p>Charter schools are held to a higher degree of accountability already...</p> <p>What happens when board makeup changes? Will language be changed again?</p>
Introduction Language	<p>[no specific feedback on this]</p>	<p>Why is language being changed in the first place?</p>	<p>Need a sentence that honors the family choice for the schools that families make</p>

New Petition Language		Might be illegal to flatly state that district won't seek charter petitions? Can this legally be said?	[no specific feedback on this]
Renewal Language		Charters will have to approach the board first for renewals? What is OCS role?	Charter admin spends so much time on data and paperwork hard to focus on students.

Additional notes from Breakout Group 4:

(1) What about the language resonates with you?

Participant: The word *autonomy*.....Significant degree of autonomy – this needs to be unpacked..

- What are we talking about?

Participant – How do you define autonomy? Because we [charter schools] are held to more of a stringent presentation and documentation than a regular school in the district

- How is the word autonomy being used?

Participant – Agree with [name] and [name] – already there are layers of accountability that [we] have to answer to. There is a finite microscope [on us]

- We are held to a higher degree...at same time OUSD schools are harming students – don't put values

Participant – I agree

Participant – what are the reasons [for this language change]?

Participant – I am a charter parent. What exactly is being talking about? Is it that OUSD is taking over the charter system?

(2) What questions and/or concerns do you have about the language?

(3) Is there anything missing?

Participant: Trying to change the language...Let me change this language with word like *autonomy*. Word needs to be identified or defined clearly. Maneuver the language so charter schools approach us [school board?] for renewals.

- [Charter school] Administration spends so much time with data and documentation so it's hard to run the school....

Participant: If that [current school board not present when policy originally was written] is indeed the issue with school board not present when the Ed Code was written? Are they going to rewrite Ed Code? When will the board provide a red line version of what it was and what it will be? *Note: Red line version later provided during mtg*
There has to be an actual hearing..

Participant – What happens when the board changes and they are not there – will it change again? The emotional continuity ... constantly changes....so that is what is going to happen ...wanting to change the language on the back of teachers and community

Participant: A parent listening in on the conversation – why we are talking about language? Talk to teachers and they are under pressure from their bosses – attendance is not being met...The focus is not on the kids...focus has become about the adults

Participant – We should acknowledge what is happening: One OUSD board member has said over and over that charters schools are not public schools. Two other things:

- (1) There has to be a sentence about OUSD authorized public charter schools that are open to students that choose those schools.
- (2) People have named the politics. Lighthouse/Lodestar – enrollment has ___ over the past year(s). In the language that we should have a sentence that honors the family choice for the schools that they choose

Participant: Going back to the objective of changing the board language...Is there a need to update?

Why is it being updated?

- The reason why she chose to put her children in a charter school. Had to put them in a charter because the district was not taking care of her children. She is 5th generation Oakland.

Is the goal of the requirements is to further take away the options??

What is the objective of rewriting it?

Participant – (Has children in charter and district schools) Charter schools are excelling.

- My right to choose.
- Language sets a dangerous precedent – we are putting everything else in the way. Denies access. People are choosing after being failed by a school.

Participant – my concern as well. Public schools are anti-charter. He has made if be very clear. Should language be looked at and change? This individual is anti-charter.

Participant – Change does not need to be a bad thing. Who is benefitting... Children are not benefitting...

Focus should be on Quality + Better schools.

- Change is not necessarily a bad thing – not the best idea. Too much noise (in language?)

Notes from “Large Group Share Out”:

Participant: As a parent, she put her children in private schools. Please take into consideration what we are saying as parents.

Participant: A parent mentioned the following in her room, her question was: Is there a timeframe related to this change? How often is what she’s asking. How often would the language be looked at?

Committee Member: That is a good question. There is no systematic process by when policies get reviewed.

Sometimes it’s brought down by the state.

The question is when we are planning to take action – then revisions this spring.

Participant: (Lighthouse alumni & Lodestar parent) Lodestar is not working for them. For her, lodestar is not working for her son. Son in being bullied and she has reached out to no avail. She contacted every person she knew but she felt disrespected. But for her son, nothing has been working. I have to send him to an OUSD public school.

Participant – Policy student in education. Wanted to give voice, bring to light that they are managed differently. The language is not specific enough. We don’t want to take more time.

Notes from “Questions” section:

Any feedback outside of the proposed language?

Participant: What’s going to happen with this feedback? Will it make a difference or is it perfunctory? What is the next step, have we thought about the unintended consequences? Where will that be published and looks at feedback and where will it be published.

Committee Member response: Why? It’s a new committee, two years now – we recently adopted what the committee’s charge from the board. This policy is boilerplate. It doesn’t say very much. It is not a substantive policy; we want to make it an accurate reflection of what it is.

How will feedback be used? Notes were taken in small groups and will be shared back with the members of the charter committee. Board policy is always reflection of

agreements and disagreements. Some people should be more strict more specific, - product of compromised from different perspectives.

Staff Response: We will be discussing the feedback at the end of the month.

Participant: [Former employee of a local charter school.] Looking at some of the language. See this a lot – people throwing terms out there. Think it's vague. Like stuff that is more specific. Student first, excellent, equity. Will we use this? What is shared definition. What does equity mean? Do we have a shared definition?

Committee Member: We will reference definitions to some of these terms as they are already spelled out in some cases.

Participant: The expanded scope of the recommendation. The piece around limiting the scope of the recommendation of the office of charters schools. What is going to be the relationship of OCS to the process?

Committee Member: Recommendation process won't change much. The committee could make a rec to the board but if they did it would be in consultation with the Office of Charter Schools.