

Board Office Use: Legislative File Info.	
File ID Number	24-0195
Introduction Date	1/24/2024
Enactment Number	24-0281
Enactment Date	2/14/2024 er



**OAKLAND UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
Community Schools, Thriving Students

# Board Cover Memorandum

**To** Board of Education

**From** Benjamin “Sam” Davis, President, Board of Education  
Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Superintendent  
Dexter Moore, Jr., Chief of Staff

**Meeting Date** February 14, 2024

**Subject** ADOPTION of 2024 Legislative Platform

**Ask of the Board** The Board of Education will adopt the 2024 Legislative Platform of the Oakland Unified School District.

**Background** For the past several years, the Board of Education has adopted a legislative platform that guides the work of the District’s legislative advocacy in Sacramento. In previous years, the OUSD legislative platform supported positions that were adopted in state law and/or acknowledged as State priorities in several areas, including career technical education, early childhood education, school facilities, student safety, charter schools, and others.

The OUSD Intergovernmental Relations committee is bringing forward a legislative platform which addresses a range of topics beyond fiscal matters to support our local education efforts and students.

The early winter months are critical for the development of the California state budget, so the adoption of this legislative platform is timely this month. Please take special note of Legislative Priority Area: School Finance.

The 2024 Legislative Platform has been informed by review and suggestions from District staff. The Board’s first read and discussion occurred on January 24, 2024.

**Discussion** We recommend the Board adopt the 2024 Legislative Platform

**Fiscal Impact** There are a number of fiscal impacts that can accrue through adoption of the Legislative Platform. Some of the positions can lead to increased funds for the District. Other positions can help avoid costly new mandates.

**Attachment(s)** 2024 Legislative Platform

# Background



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Recognizing we remain in the process of recovering from the trauma and challenges of the pandemic, a time in our history like no other, it is key that we focus on the changed and evolving needs of our students and ensuring that our organization is ready and equipped to meet them. Oakland public schools serve as centers for our community—places where Oakland comes together. They are places of joy and beauty, safety and rejuvenation, friendship, and scholarship. We aim to build on our foundation as a full-service community school district and a district focused on equity and college, career, and community success.

We adopted a Strategic Plan 2021-2024 to guide us on this journey and to bring together the collective resilience, wisdom, ideas, and know-how of our community to create the conditions for all of our students to thrive. Our legislative priorities are aligned and support our four key initiatives: **(1) Ensuring Strong Readers by Third Grade; (2) Supporting Empowered Graduates; (3) Creating Joyful Schools; and (4) Growing a Diverse and Stable Staff.**

Moreover, our strategic plan is unapologetically about Black and Brown excellence - meaning that our planning, strategy, training, resources, and programming is designed to center our most marginalized students, our students furthest from opportunity and success. We are committed to tearing down opportunity barriers to ensure the success of **all** students. The Legislative Platform is aligned with the key initiatives of our Strategic Plan.

We also know that the pandemic has exacerbated historical and persistent challenges while creating new ones. It requires us to continue to problem solve, address and build new innovative solutions and partnerships to ensure the health of our district for the students we currently educate and those we will educate in the future. The myriad issues of declining enrollment, increased chronic absenteeism, increased demand for independent study, and the pandemic's profound social-emotional impact on students, call on us to lead with grace, intelligence and perseverance locally while also advocating and partnering with state agencies for the best solutions - with student academic and social-emotional success at the center.

Fulfilling our vision and mission, addressing challenges and innovating for student success requires resources and the strategic use of all of our assets. We are committed to pursuing adequate resources for our students and transparently and responsibly managing our resources to ensure the success of current students and many generations of future students. Our plans and actions today must be with the mindset of building a healthy and exemplary school district for our children's children.



## School Finance

OUSD aspires to return to a full, democratic local-controlled school district and supports state and local fiscal policies that provide optimal, stable, and equitable funding that reflect the costs of giving our students— regardless of their background—what they need to be successful in school and in the community. We support leveraging fiscal policies that promote optimal use of district resources to support student learning and success. We support efforts to provide funding to districts based on student enrollment that better reflects local planning and budgeting practices. We also support increasing base LCFF funding to ensure California is among the top ten in the nation in per-student spending. State and federal fiscal resources should recognize and accommodate regional cost differences and unique costs of serving vulnerable student groups who need additional instructional and non-instructional support to attain educational parity, such as unhoused and refugee students.

## Ensuring Strong Readers by the Third Grade

**Accountability:** OUSD supports a multiple-measures accountability system that aligns with our continuous improvement model catalyzed by the Local Control and Accountability Plan and the California School Dashboard. We believe a continuous improvement approach to accountability will propel our District and schools toward increased performance targets through careful analysis of student and school performance data that includes the use of a student growth model when evaluating annual standardized assessment results. OUSD supports policies that provide timely school performance data, which is imperative for enabling our leaders to make informed organizational decisions and our educators to make pedagogical decisions that benefit our students. Similarly, OUSD uses statewide data to meet its obligations as a charter school authorizer to ensure that all students in Oakland have access to a high-quality education. We support accountability provisions that ensure our most marginalized students, and particularly students of color, are given opportunities and support to be successful in their learning and academic journeys.

**Early Education:** OUSD supports policies that aim to achieve a coherent, high-quality pre-kindergarten system, with minimal application complexities and stable, meaningful funding. We know that high-quality early learning opportunities benefit all our children; particularly those who have not traditionally had access to high-quality programs. OUSD believes that providing a quality preschool experience sets a positive start for the child’s educational career. This includes

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acknowledging and supporting our educators who support our early learning programs and ensuring their professional success. By investing in preschool, children have short- term and long-term benefits, including improved academic and school readiness and higher graduation rates. We are committed to addressing the socio-economic challenges of our families that limit equitable access to the benefits of preschool.

## Supporting Empowered Graduates

**Career Technical Education:** We support the continued and increased investment in the Career Technical Education (CTE) Incentive Grant Program that augments our local parcel tax and supports our effort to expand CTE opportunities for all students. Our local initiative has shown great results in increasing graduation rates, which are a top priority for our district. We are active participants in the K-12 Strong Workforce Program, collaborating with other K-14 CTE providers in our region to meet the needs of our students and our community. We support predictable, multiyear grants that allow us to flexibly invest in promising, high-quality local pathways without unnecessary state bureaucracy and requirements that inhibit our ability to expand CTE to all students. We support policies that help to enrich our CTE programs with increased state funding to offset increased local contribution requirements.

## Creating Joyful Schools

**Facilities:** OUSD supports the continuation of a state facilities assistance program, supported by statewide school bonds, that ensures the state is meeting its obligation to provide equitable and fair access to a free public education and maintains the state-local partnership essential to building and renovating school facilities that meet the demands of 21st century learning. We believe in providing safe, healthy, and environmentally sustainable schools that help to achieve the state's climate resiliency goals. We believe that the state must provide the funding necessary to retrofit existing schools for seismic safety and other environmental hazards, to address California's oldest schools, to upgrade building systems to meet current requirements, and to ensure that schools can be renovated for effective instruction and learning. We support policies that maximize facilities use to serve students and families throughout the Oakland community, as well as innovative policies that enables us to leverage our capital assets to attract, retain and cultivate talent so that our educators can live in the city where they teach.

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**Community Schools:** OUSD believes that creating safe, caring, and supportive schools is essential to ensuring students' academic and social success. We have created health and wellness goals that support social, emotional, mental, and physical health and employ a restorative justice model that works to lower our rate of suspension and expulsion and to foster a positive school climate. We support increased resources that fund the district to address both the physical and mental health needs of our students and allow the district to respond to student misconduct in a constructive, locally determined manner. Because many of our students rely on school meals as a primary source of nutrition, we believe meal reimbursement rates should be increased to reflect the costs associated with providing free, healthy meals to all our students. We also support a special provision that builds on the community schools model and provides incentives for districts to make vacant and/or underutilized facilities available to organizations providing essential services within our Community Schools model. Moreover, we support providing ongoing funding to sustain the additional cost of operating full-service community schools which go beyond the costs associated with traditional school sites.

**Newcomer Students:** OUSD is a sanctuary for newcomer students, many of whom are unaccompanied minors. By 2024-25, we anticipate that 1 in every 5 of our high school students will be a newcomer. In addition to the challenges of adjusting to an unfamiliar country, newcomer students are often homeless, highly transient and often have untreated health and/or mental health issues and trauma. As a result, newcomer students are at greater risk for dropping out of school and require additional curricular resources that are adapted for their unique circumstances. The state finance model should recognize that, unlike more stable student populations, refugee and newcomer students enroll in districts throughout the school year and thus should be accounted for purposes of funding on enrollment rather than attendance basis. Currently, migrant students with similar enrollment patterns are accounted for by enrollment and not by attendance. We support the development and issuance of guidance regarding requirements and best practices specific to newcomer students, including curricular frameworks and publicly reportable data to the California Department of Education.

**Special Education:** OUSD supports educational and fiscal policies that, when accompanied by adequate resources, serve students with disabilities in learning environments where they can thrive. We believe that students should be given the opportunity to learn among their peers in classrooms where they are supported by staff and resources designed to eradicate barriers to their academic success. We believe charter schools should be required to join the SELPA of the district in which they are located as a condition of granting or renewal of their charter. We believe in increases to the scope of the extraordinary cost pool so that districts are reimbursed for a

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larger portion of the costs for students requiring residential placements, individual aides, and other intensive services. We believe in requiring charter schools to have certificated staffing with credentials in extensive support needs (ESN) in alignment with AB 1505, and mandating the disclosure of student data between charter schools and their authorizers.

**School Safety:** OUSD supports policies that protect students and staff from threats to their safety. We believe in a comprehensive approach to student safety, including increased accountability for social media platforms that induce safety threats, strong systems for cybersecurity, and the expanded role of community partnerships to strengthen violence prevention efforts, including gun control. We believe that the state must support local efforts to improve emergency preparedness, violence and disaster prevention, and comprehensive incident response plans to ensure that schools remain a safe place for teaching and learning.

**Student Attendance.** The pandemic continues to have profound effects on student attendance and chronic absence. Nearly two years of remote learning stunted the social-emotional development of our students and caused a mental health pandemic. We support policies that provide resources to help the district address these persistent and lingering issues to help our students regain their resilience, re-engage in their school community to foster connection and belonging, and to rediscover the joy of learning.

**Charter Schools:** OUSD supports student-focused charter school policies along the full policy continuum that promotes a shared responsibility to educate all of Oakland's youth, including our most vulnerable populations such as students with moderate/severe disabilities, English Learners, newcomers, homeless students, and foster youth. State charter policy must do more to ensure that charter schools serve all students, as they are legally obligated to do. We believe that California should continue to evaluate charter school policies to ensure that charter schools beneficially augment educational programs offered in the district and in their communities in ways that reflect the needs and demographics of the district and community. Additionally, OUSD believes that the regulations governing Proposition 39 facilities requests need to recognize the unique facilities needs of specific student groups, such as English learners and students with disabilities, whose educational programs and services result in nontraditional facilities needs. Current Proposition 39 regulations do not explicitly allow districts or charter schools to consider the facility space needs for students with disabilities when determining available capacity or facilities needs for charter school requests.



## Growing a Diverse and Stable Staff

**Human Resources:** OUSD supports policies that promote the recruitment and development of a diverse, talented workforce trained to meet the needs of California’s increasingly diverse student body. Such policies should include investments along the full professional continuum, beginning with high-quality teacher preparation programs that provide in-the-classroom experience with master teachers and afford immediate compensation for student teachers, support for new teachers during the critically important first few years in the classroom, ongoing educator support to develop and refine skills in multicultural literacy as well as ethnic and language diversity, and tenure policies that promote continuous improvement in teaching practices. OUSD supports policies that create multiple accessible pathways into the teaching profession, including non-traditional alternatives to high stakes licensure testing, and alleviate the hardship of high workforce attrition as well as the traditional hard-to-fill subject matters of science, mathematics, multilingual education, and special education. In addition, our community’s high living costs make it difficult for promising young educators to afford teaching in the district; a high-cost community like Oakland warrants additional support to make the reward of teaching our students feasible.