



Board Community Engagement Report

2009-2010 Engagements

Prepared by Urban Strategies Council
for the East Bay Community Foundation
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I. Background

In March of 2008, the Oakland Board of Education adopted “Community Conversations” as its formal 2008-2009 community engagement plan. During the 2008 – 2009 school year, each Board of Education member planned to conduct at least two school-community workshops at each of their district’s high schools and red tiered (lowest performing) schools to inform Board policy. To complement the larger community workshops, many board members elected to meet separately with other stakeholder groups including parent leaders, teachers and students. The first workshops took place in the Fall Semester (October and November 2008) and follow-up workshops were conducted in the Spring semester (April and May 2009).

The Board Member used a modified version of this format over the 2009-2010 school year to engage their constituents about the 2010-2011 budget cuts and related questions about options to reduce costs and increase revenues (fiscal solvency) academic performance of school (academic solvency).

Summary of 2008-09 Academic Year Convenings Design, Implementation and Report

Fall

In the Fall of 2008, Board Members held 27 workshops which were attended by 540 members of the community. Below is a summary of the agenda and outcomes of the Fall workshops.

Fall Workshop Agenda

The standard agenda for the Fall workshops was designed to solicit input from parents, families and community and to learn what works and what does not at the selected schools.

- I Preliminaries**
- II School Data Presentation: How is this school performing?**
 - 1. Overall Performance
 - 2. Student Achievement tied to goals
 - a. College and Career Readiness (HS only)
 - b. Citizenship/Student Discipline
 - c. School Climate
 - 3. Tiered Color and Program Improvement Status
- III Inquiry Activity**
 - 1. What are we doing to increase the number of students who:
 - a. stay in school and graduate (High Schools):?
 - b. are proficient in Algebra (Middle Schools)?
 - c. are proficient in Reading (Elementary Schools)?
 - 2. What's working?
 - 3. What needs to be done?
 - 4. What should the Board of Education do to help the school?

IV Next Steps

V Closing & Incentives

Fall Recommendations from Parents and Families

The Fall workshops generated 98 distinct recommendations from members of the 27 participating school communities. The most common recommendations are summarized in the table below.

Common Recommendations from Fall Workshops

Academic Achievement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide a way for parents to monitor student assignments.2. Retain qualified and excellent teachers at every school.3. More resources for afterschool programs.4. More parent training programs (English, Math, etc.).5. More translation support to improve parent teacher interactions.
Attendance	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Institute a system to inform parents about attendance.2. Increase electives so students are motivated to attend.
Discipline	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide incentives for good behavior.2. Follow a consistent discipline policy.
School Climate	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Recognize students' good behavior with positive incentives.2. Organize a youth court to address social issues.3. Provide tools for students to voice their opinions in a safe environment.4. Parents should visit schools and support teachers from home.

Report on Fall Workshops

For more information about Fall program performance, outcomes and recommendations, please see the report on the Fall workshops available online here:

<http://www.urbanstrategies.org/programs/schools/ExpectSuccess.php>

Spring

In the Spring of 2009 Board Members held 12 workshops which were attended by 483 members of the community. Below is a summary of the agenda of the spring workshops.

Spring Workshop Agenda

I. Welcome & Student Recognition

II. Board Report

1. Board member presents what they heard from the district as a whole, from their board district and from the school.
 - a. Board member presents to the large group
 - b. Policy/ Strategic Direction
 - c. Budget

- d. Superintendent Search
2. Board member explains how feedback from school, board district, and school helped shape policy.

III. School Progress

1. Principal/teachers present school strategies that work.

IV. Closing

Report on Spring Workshops

For more information about Spring program performance, outcomes and recommendations, please see the report on the Spring workshops available online here:

<http://www.urbanstrategies.org/programs/schools/ExpectSuccess.php>

II. Program Description

Overview of 2009-10 Academic Year Convening Design

Board Members planned to meet at least once with their constituents in a large workshop before the Superintendent made his budgetary recommendations to the Board in mid-December of 2010. While several Board Members held more than one meeting, district staff only guaranteed support and the attendance of the Superintendent at one of each Board Member's meetings.

Goals and Objectives

The stated goals for the 2010 Workshops were:

"To dialogue with the community about the present and future state of the School District to promote academic success and fiscal responsibility."

Agenda

- I. Welcome, Introductions
- II. Meeting Purpose and Process
- III. **Current State:** What progress have we made and what challenges do we face?
 - A. Review and provide input on Vision, Values and Priorities for "Academic Success"
 - B. Review State Fiscal Crisis and the impact for OUSD Funding for 2010-2011 and beyond.
- IV. **Future State:** Planning for 2010-2011 and beyond
 - A. Engage in discussion about key budget challenges/ opportunities.
 1. Enrollment & Attendance
 2. Teacher / Employee Compensation
 3. Class & School Size
 4. Safety & School Climate
 - B. Understand next steps and how you can stay involved in planning for academic and fiscal solvency
- V. Closing, Acknowledgements and Meeting Feedback

Changes to process & timeline

One Board Member (District 4) chose to conduct a large meeting with representatives from each of his schools before the District staff had developed a common agenda for each meeting. Therefore, because participant input does not speak to the common agenda items, the input from that meeting is not included in this report.

Another Board Member (District 1) chose to conduct numerous community meetings about the 2010-2011 budget cuts instead of one attended by the Superintendent and District Staff. Only one of her meetings is covered in this report.

Because of the size of District 7, that Board Member conducted two fully-staffed meetings, both of which are covered in this report.

Finally, another Board Member (District 2) chose to hold his meeting after the Superintendent had given his budget recommendations, in order to focus discussion on the budget recommendations this meeting is included in this report.

Roles & Responsibilities

- District staff worked with Board Members to schedule, plan and provide logistics for each meeting.
- Urban Strategies Council was contracted by the East Bay Community Foundation through a grant from the Gates Foundation to take notes at each meeting and to summarize the notes into a final report (this document).
- Hatchel Tabernik and Associates (HTA) was contracted to develop an addendum to their evaluation of the 2008-2009 process to include an assessment of the 2009-2010 process.
- East Bay Community Foundation provided financial support for meeting logistics through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant.
- The Project Leadership Team for community education and convening provided strategic planning and technical assistance as needed.

Methods

Urban Strategies Council staff attended the seven meetings covered in this report. At each meeting, staff took notes into a pre-formatted template which tracked with the meeting agenda. Later, notes were refined into reports on each meeting.

Participant, Board Member, and District Staff comments were synthesized into this report. Comments for each agenda item were categorized by topic and rated as either:

- a positive or negative opinion,
- a question,
- a preference for changed policies and strategies
- an informational statement.

Number of convenings

Seven meetings are covered in this report. As mentioned above, a large meeting in District 4 as well as several meetings in District 1 are not covered in this report.

Number of participants

In total, 329 participants attended the meetings covered in this report. That includes 53 children, 57 staff members, 95 parents and 114 members of the community.

Table: Number of Participants and Meetings

District	Number of Meetings	Children	Students	<i>Subtotal Children / Students</i>	Parent	Community Member	Staff	<i>Adult Subtotal</i>	Grand Total
District 1	1	0	0	0	2	17	0	19	19
District 2	1	6	14	20	59	48	5	112	132
District 3	1	3	4	7	8	40	14	62	69
District 5	1	0	2	2	1		8	9	11
District 6	1	6	11	17	19	5	9	33	50
District 7	2		5	7	6	4	21	41	48
Grand Total	7	15	36	53	95	114	57	276	329

III. Topics Discussed at Meetings

1. District Vision

Board Presentation

At three of the seven meetings Board Members presented the district vision: *“All students will graduate as caring, competent and critical thinkers, fully informed, engaged and contributing citizens, prepared to succeed in college and career”*.

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants voiced no questions or comments on the District Vision at any of the seven meetings. Feedback was not requested on this agenda item.

2. Board’s Strategic Priority

Board Presentation

At four of the seven meetings Board Members presented the Board’s Strategic Priority: *“Our number one priority is to have high-quality instruction in every classroom that results in high levels of learning for every student”*. The five statements made by Board Members focused either on effective instruction or achievement.

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants made three comments at two meetings about the Board’s Strategic Priority. Two were negative opinions about professional development. One comment questioned how technical education fit with the college preparatory curriculum.

3. District’s Core Values

Staff Presentation

At one meeting, the Superintendent specifically spoke to the district’s core values of *Achievement, Equity & Accountability* by saying: *“This district has an incredible opportunity to heal and move forward. The city needs to have a city conversation about what good schools and classrooms look like. There are different experiences for different kids based on where they are in Oakland. So how do we come together as a city to ensure every child has a great education? Our kids should go to schools where they get benefits and where they want to learn.”*

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants voiced no questions or comments specifically about the District’s core values at any of the seven meetings.

4. Progress Over the Past Five Years

Board Presentation

Board Members presented the District’s progress over the past five years at six of the seven meetings. Of the 26 total comments, the majority were positive opinions or informational statements. Statements were most often about improved API scores (5), expanded afterschool programming (5), or that the district was the most improved urban district in the state (4). All other topics are summarized in the table below.

Table: Board Statements on Progress over the Past Five Years

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Total
achievement	1		1		2
API	4		1		5
expanded afterschool	3		2		5
expanded summer school	1		1		2
graduation rate	3				3
improved facilities			1		1
most improved in state	2		2		4
partnerships with city, county, community & other agencies				1	1
small schools	1	1	1		3
Grand Total	15	1	9	1	26

Participant Questions & Comments

One participant, a teacher, had a positive opinion about the district’s progress over the last five years. She said: “I have been a teacher here nine years in the district. For the first four years there were no teacher manuals. Now for five years I’ve had them.” There were no other participant comments on this agenda item.

5. District’s Challenges

Board / Staff Presentation

Board Members or District Staff presented the District’s Challenges at five of the seven meetings. The achievement gap between Caucasian and Black and Latino students was the most common topic (mentioned 7 times) that Board Members and District Staff discussed while presenting on the District’s Challenges. Statements were split between preferences for changed policies & strategies (8), negative opinions (7) and informational statements (5).

Table: Board & Staff Statements on the District’s Challenges

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Total
achievement gap	3	4			7
channel funding to effective instruction				1	1
Community / parent / student engagement		1		2	3
how can we convince students that tests are important	1				1
how to get involved				1	1
increased supports needed				2	2
low performance of high schools	1				1
relevance of courses		2			2
school closures				1	1
shifting the story that people tell				1	1
Grand Total	5	7		8	20

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants commented on the District’s challenges at three meetings. Community and parent engagement was the most common topic that participants discussed while commenting on the District’s Challenges (3 comments). Most comments were preferences for changed policies & strategies (4) while the remainder were negative opinions (3).

Table: Participant Comments on the District’s Challenges

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Question	Total
achievement gap		1		1		2
community / parent engagement				3		3
effective instruction		1				1
relevance of courses		1				1
Grand Total		3		4		7

6. District's Priorities Going Forward

Board / Staff Presentation

Board Members or District Staff presented the District's priorities going forward at three of the seven meetings. The characteristics of great schools, classrooms, and instruction was the most common topic (mentioned 7 times) that Board Members and District Staff discussed while presenting on the District's priorities going forward. The vast majority of statements were preferences for changed policies & strategies (10) while the remainder were informational statements (5).

Table: Board & Staff Statements on the District's Priorities Going Forward

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Total
achievement gap	1				1
achievement strategies	1				1
characteristics of great schools, classrooms & instruction	3			4	7
how to get involved				1	1
partnerships with city, county, community & other agencies				2	2
relevance of courses				2	2
school safety				1	1
Grand Total	5			10	15

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants made no questions or comments specifically about the District's priorities going forward at any of the seven meetings.

7. Cuts to the 2010-2011 District Budget

Board / Staff Presentation

Board Members or District Staff presented the 2010-2011 budget cuts at each of the seven meetings. Board Members and District Staff most commonly presented on the following two topics:

1. how the budget works (where the money comes from, what it can be spent on) and how the cuts would affect that (27 comments)
2. linking the state budget crisis to the 2010-2011 budget cuts (11).

The vast majority of the statements were informational statements (38), while the remainder of the comments were mostly preferences for changed policies & strategies (10).

Table: Board & Staff Statements on Budget Cuts

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Total
achievement gap				1	1
achievement strategies		1			1
budgetary effects of truancy, chronic absenteeism and dropouts	1				1
comparison to national context	1				1
debt	1				1
how the budget works	22	1	3	1	27
excess capacity	1			1	2
improved facilities	1				1
increased supports needed				2	2
inform elected officials of effects of budget crisis				1	1
link budget cuts to state budget crisis	10	1			11
partnerships with city, county, community & other agencies				3	3
school closures	1	1		1	3
students enrolling out of district in other public or charter schools		1	1		2
Grand Total	38	5	4	10	57

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants commented on the district budget cuts at six of the seven meetings. Participants most commonly commented on how the budget works (6). Participants mostly stated preferences for changed policies & strategies (10) or asked questions (6).

Table: Participant Questions & Comments on District Budget Cuts

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Question	Total
channel funding to effective instruction				1		1
charters' effect on budget					1	1
Community / parent / student engagement					1	1
how the budget works		1		2	3	6
get involved in US political system				1		1
how to get involved				1		1
increasing class & school size could diminish safety and quality instruction			1			1
link budget cuts to state budget crisis			1	1	1	3
partnerships with city, county, community & other agencies				2		2
waste of district funds		1		2		3
Grand Total		2	2	10	6	20

8. Enrollment & Attendance

Board / Staff Presentation

Board Members and District staff presented on enrollment and attendance at five of the seven meetings. The thirteen statements covered nine topics (summarized in the table below). Most were informational statements (8) while the remainder were preferences for changed policies & strategies (5).

Table: Board & Staff Statements on Enrollment and Attendance

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Total
budgetary effects of declining enrollment	1				1
budgetary effects of truancy, chronic absenteeism and dropouts	3				3
causes of truancy, chronic absenteeism and dropouts	1			1	2
community / parent / student engagement				1	1
excess capacity				1	1
increased supports needed				1	1
relationship between five things: compensation, number of schools, number of classes & class size, central office size and services, number of kids.	1				1
shifting the story that people tell				1	1
students enrolling out of district in other public or charter schools	2				2
Grand Total	8			5	13

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants commented on enrollment and attendance at five of the seven meetings. The nineteen comments covered eleven topics (summarized in the table below). Participants mostly stated preferences for changed policies & strategies (9).

Table: Participant Questions & Comments on Enrollment & Attendance

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Question	Total
achievement strategies					1	1
budgetary effects of truancy, chronic absenteeism and dropouts				1	1	2
causes of truancy, chronic absenteeism and dropouts				1	2	3
closed campuses				1		1
community / parent / student engagement			2			2
decentralize registration location				1		1
declining enrollment & private school attendance		1			1	2
how to get involved				1		1
increased supports needed				4		4
school closures		1				1
students enrolling out of district in other public or charter schools		1				1
Grand Total		3	2	9	5	19

9. Teacher/Employee Compensation

Board / Staff Presentation

Board Member and District Staff presented on teacher/employee compensation at six of the seven meetings. Their eight statements ranged over five topics (summarized in the table below). Half of the statements were informational statements (4).

Table: Board & Staff Statements on Teacher / Employee Compensation

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Total
lowest compensation in East Bay	1				1
parcel tax & teacher raises	1			1	2
relationship between five things: compensation, number of schools, number of classes & class size, central office size and services, number of kids.	1				1
teacher quality	1			1	2
teacher turnover		2			2
Grand Total	4	2		2	8

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants commented on teacher/employee compensation at four of the seven meetings. Most comments were about teacher quality (6).

Table: Participant Comments about Teacher/Employee Compensation

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Question	Total
availability of teacher certification programs				1	1	2
budget impact of consultants/pre-packaged curriculum				1		1
teacher quality	1	3		1	1	6
Grand Total	1	3		3	2	9

10. Class Size / School Size

Board / Staff Presentation

Board Members and District Staff presented on class and school size at six of the seven meetings. The ten statements ranged over seven topics (summarized in the table below).

Table: Board & Staff Statements about Class Size & School Size

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Total
budgetary effect of increasing class sizes	1				1
budgetary effects of declining enrollment				2	2
how to get involved	1				1
increasing class & school size could diminish safety and quality instruction			2		2
relationship between five things: compensation, number of schools, number of classes & class size, central office size and services, number of kids.	1				1
small class size	1			1	2
state ratio penalties				1	1
Grand Total	4		2	4	10

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants made comments about School and Class size at four of the seven meetings. The twelve comments ranged over seven topics (summarized below).

Table: Participant Comments about Class & School Size

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Question	Total
Community / parent / student engagement				1		1
comparison to state context					1	1
increased supports needed			2			2
increasing class & school size could diminish safety and quality instruction		1	4			5
keep class sizes lower in parts of the district with high proportions of underserved, high minority and high mobility students				1		1
move teachers from closed schools to keep class size low				1		1
number of students willing to increase class size by				1		1
Grand Total		1	6	4	1	12

11. Safety and School Climate

Board / Staff Presentation

Board Members and District Staff discussed safety and school climate at six of the seven meetings. The twenty two statements ranged across ten topics (summarized below). Most frequently, statements were informational (10) or preferences for changed policies & strategies (7).

Table: Board & Staff Statements on Safety & School Climate

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Total
co locating services and activities at schools	3				3
community / parent / student engagement				2	2
cross –racial alliance building	1				1
embedding safe schools in safe neighborhoods	1		1		2
gang prevention	2			1	3
improved facilities	1				1
partnerships with city, county, community & other agencies				3	3
school safety	2				2
shifting the story that people tell		1	1	1	3
students enrolling out of district in other public or charter schools		2			2
Grand Total	10	3	2	7	22

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants made comments about school climate and safety at four of the seven meetings. The sixteen comments ranged over eleven topics (summarized in the table below). The vast majority of comments were preferences for changed policies & strategies (9).

Table: Participant Comments about Safety & School Climate

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Question	Total
budgetary effects of declining enrollment		1				1
class & school size related to safety and quality instruction				1		1
Community / parent / student engagement			1	1		2
decentralize registration location				1		1
increased supports needed		1		1		2
partnerships with city, county, community & other agencies			1	1		2
Professional development				1		1
school safety					2	2
shifting the story that people tell				1		1
teacher quality			1			1
walking & biking on safe routes to school				2		2
Grand Total		2	3	9	2	16

12. Next steps

Board / Staff Presentation

Board Members and District Staff presented Next Steps at six of the seven meetings. The most common topic was “how to get involved” (7). The remaining eighteen statements ranged over six other topics.

Table: Board & Staff Statements on Next Steps

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Total
channel funding to effective instruction	1				1
Community / parent / student engagement	1		2	1	4
district budget	5				5
how to get involved	3			4	7
inform elected officials of effects of budget crisis				4	4
link budget cuts to state budget crisis	3				3
student engagement in decisions			1		1
Grand Total	13		3	9	25

Participant Questions & Comments

Participants commented on the recommended next steps at five meetings. The twelve comments ranged over seven topics.

Table: Participant Comments on Next Steps

Topics	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Question	Total
causes of truancy, chronic absenteeism and dropouts	1					1
communication with families		1				1
Community / parent / student engagement				1	1	2
get involved in US political system					1	1
how to get involved				1	1	2
inform elected officials of effects of budget crisis		2		1		3
student engagement in decisions			1	1		2
Grand Total	1	3	1	4	3	12

IV. Fall 2009 Board Engagement Program Performance

This section of the report provides a brief assessment of the fall 2009 Board engagement program. We consider the efficacy of the program in:

1. Sharing board policy process & priorities
2. Generating community & family input
3. As a community engagement process & opportunity

Effectiveness in Sharing Board Policy Process & Priorities

At the request of the Board, District Staff prepared a common agenda for the fall 2010 meetings. The agenda covered the Board's policy process and priorities related to the District's present and future academic and fiscal status. The table below summarizes the number of meetings at which each agenda item was discussed by a Board Member or District Staff. The degree to which the board policy Process and priorities were shared can be inferred from the number of meetings at which each topic was covered.

Agenda Item	Number of Meetings at Which the Topic was Presented
Vision	3
Board's Strategic Priority	4
Core Values	1
District's Progress	6
District's Challenges	5
District's Priorities Going Forward	3
District Budget Cuts	7
Enrollment & Attendance	5
Teacher / Employee Compensation	6
Class & School Size	6
Safety & School Climate	6
Next Steps	6

Strengths

1. The fiscal challenges and opportunities (enrollment & attendance, teacher/employee compensation, class & school size, safety and school climate) that the board is considering as it makes decisions about the 2010-2011 budget were presented at the majority of the meetings.
2. The 2010-2011 budget cuts were presented at each meeting.

Areas for Improvement

1. The principles, priorities, and values that will inform board decisions were rarely presented.

Effectiveness Generating Community and Family Input

The table below summarizes the number and types of comments that participants voiced on each agenda item. The number and type of comments indicate the effectiveness of the program at generating community and family input.

Agenda Item	Informational Statements	Negative Opinion	Positive Opinion	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Question	Total
Vision						
Board’s Strategic Priority		2			1	
Core Values						
District’s Progress			1			1
District’s Challenges		3		4		7
District’s Priorities Going Forward		2			1	
District Budget Cuts		2	2	10	6	20
Enrollment & Attendance		3	2	9	5	19
Teacher / Employee Compensation	1	3		3	2	9
Class & School Size		1	6	4	1	12
Safety & School Climate		2	3	9	2	16
Next Steps	1	3	1	4	3	12
Grand Total	2	21	15	43	21	96

Strengths

1. The workshops generated 96 comments about the state of the district, the Board Priority and fiscal challenges and opportunities. These comments are summarized in the table above as well as in Section III of this report: “Topics Discussed at Workshops.”
2. 79 of the 96 comments expressed constituents’ preferences or opinions.

Areas for Improvement

1. Participant comments were rarely solicited during the presentations, more often, participants were asked to give their comments at the end of the workshops. An invitation to discuss each topic may have resulted in more and richer comments.
2. Because the agenda items were unevenly presented, participant comments also were uneven.

Efficacy as a Community Engagement Process and Opportunity

The stated goal of the Board Engagement meetings was: “To dialogue with the community about the present and future state of the School District to promote academic success and fiscal responsibility.” That dialog is qualitatively assessed in this subsection of the report.

Strengths

1. By focusing the workshops on district staff and Board Member presentations, teachers, administrators and staff were able to participate in discussions.
2. The workshops were, by and large, pleasant, cordial events that allowed parents, community members and school staff to build rapport with their Board Members.

Areas for Improvement

1. While many administrators and teachers attended the meetings, they didn't have time allocated to discuss with families from their schools what the budget cuts or other proposed measures would look like at their schools. This type of discussion could have enriched the large group discussion by grounding comments in the reality of individual schools and classrooms.

V. Recommendations for Change

The final section of this report consist of Urban Strategies' recommendations for changes to the Board Engagement process and recommendations for changes to general district policy and priorities.

Recommended Changes to Board Engagement Process

Meeting Structure & Outreach

Meetings with strong attendance that generated the greatest number of comments built on strong relationships with families, staff, and community organizations at the school sites. Effective engagement doesn't occur once a semester. Board Members should build ongoing relationships with the school leaders (including parents, staff and community organizations). For large meetings, Board Members should outreach to teams of participants from school communities. Once at the meeting, teams from each school should have a chance to caucus to discuss how what is being discussed might look like at their school.

General Policy Recommendations

Strengthening and Utilizing School Site Governance Bodies

Opportunities for Board Members to interact with their constituents are vital to the good governance of the school district. However, effective school-community engagement requires good planning and sustained efforts and should be the ongoing work of the school site through its representative parent and/or community bodies and community partners. In order to gather more input relevant to policy considerations, the Board Members should consider holding Board-community engagement meetings with the representative bodies such as School Site Council (SSC) and English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC).

It is difficult to plan and conduct an effective convening for the Board if the school does not have a regular practice of effectively engaging parents and other stakeholders. The vehicles for regular parent engagement already exist in the form of bodies such as the SSC, ELAC and other groups. A convening of

the sort recommended here would be more effective if the parent-stakeholder participatory groups were more active and were regularly tapped into to generate input and recommendations that could be delivered to the board members.

The Board engagement efforts should utilize district resources to build the capacities of SSC and ELAC to enable them to fully participate in parent engagement, support and school site planning. Representatives from high-functioning SSC's and ELAC's are able to support parents to elicit parent concerns and recommendations in order to discuss policy issues with their Board Members. Reinforcing the pre-existing governance bodies is an integrated, long-term investment in parent engagement and district governance.

Strengthening Relationships with Community Organizations

Effective community engagement across the district must be supported by effective relationships with the community organizations that serve Oakland students, their families, and communities. We recommend that the policy and processes of community engagement be integrated with the district's exploration and consideration of community school models.