

OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

1000 Broadway, Suite 680

Oakland, CA 94607-4099

ousd.org/boe | boe@ousd.org

510.879.8199 w | 510.879.2299 f | 510.879.2300 TTY/TDD

**OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Community Schools, Thriving Students

BOARD OF EDUCATION 2018**Aimee Eng**, President, District 2aimee.eng@ousd.org**Jumoke Hinton Hodge**, Vice President, District 3jumoke.hintonhodge@ousd.org**Jody London**, District 1jody.london@ousd.org**Nina Senn**, District 4nina.senn@ousd.org**Roseann Torres**, District 5roseann.torres@ousd.org**Shanthi Gonzales**, District 6shanthi.gonzales@ousd.org**James Harris**, District 7james.harris@ousd.org

Student Directors' Report November 14, 2018

Yota Omo-Sowho and Josue Chavez
Student Directors

Grounded in our OUSD values of *Students First* and *Equity*, and following our District board adopted resolution articulating our Districts commitment to student leadership and partnership through our *Meaningful Student Engagement Standards*, the following presents a report detailing the process and recommendations proposed by students in lifting the critical role of student voice on OUSD budget priorities, reductions and accommodations. The following report represents the voices of 3,625 students who have participated in defining quality schools through the leadership of our All City Council Student Union since 2007. The school site student body elected leaders who are leading the effort presented in this report, represent the voices of 7,137 current students.

Representative Student Leaders & Background

The All City Council Student Union (ACC) held their annual Meaningful Student Engagement Training & Year Action Planning Retreat on October 19 through 20th at Camp Bothin in Fairfax, CA. In attendance were 23 OUSD high school student leaders from 10 schools (Castlemont, Fremont, Life Academy, McClymonds/Emery, Madison, MetWest, Oakland High, Oakland Tech, Skyline, and Street Academy), representing a 7,137 constituency and the interests of all 36,334 OUSD non charter students. Among the participants included Associate Student Body leaders, Restorative Justice Student Leaders, School Site Council student members, and student leaders representing some of our Meaningful Student Engagement Partners - Californians For Justice, Oakland Kids First, Youth Together. In addition, students representing Gender & Sexuality Alliance, Latinos Unidos, Asian Pacific Islander Student Achievement, and African American Male Achievement were in attendance.

Student Voice Process & Methods - Summary

As part of the process, there were a series of activities that were designed to familiarize students with District demographic, academic, and budget data, and the current Board and staff process on fiscal vitality leading to OUSD budget reductions for 2019-20. Students worked diligently to answer 2 main questions: 1) What do you believe to be the most valuable aspects of your OUSD experience; aspects (people, programs, initiatives, services, things) that have positively transformed your educational experience and have prepared you for life after high school? 2) What are you committed to doing as a unified student union to lift up and defend youth priorities in the budget reduction process?

Through a focus group process, students organically articulated the things that they identified to be the most valuable to their development and offered critical feedback on how to improve on the quality of their school day experience. Adult allies participated by taking notes and posing the discussion questions in a circle process, allowing for students to lead their own group discussion.

Process & Methods - Detailed

First, students used post-it notes to list everything that their high school had exposed them to or provided for them was critical to their development. Next, as a group students synthesized their answers into overarching categories which were later labeled.

Students then examined their map of items having discussions about what they saw and what might be missing. Missing was defined as something that students wish they had or had more of within their school day experience. There were some very productive discussions that resulted in the identification of some gaps in what is in place for students. Another round of post-it notes were used to identify individual strategies that would improve the categories of items they had already determined important.

Lastly, the small groups came back together and reported their finding to the larger group of retreat attendees. The report back from each group entailed a presentation on the collaborative poster which represented the most influential experiences of their school day experience. Students describe their small group process and provided contextual meaning for the larger identified themes.

On day two, the large themes were compiled from the three small groups resulting in nine focus areas: Student Leadership Programs, Enrichment Classes, College Support Programs, Student Support Centers, Extended/Experiential Learning, Teacher Quality: Recruitment, Retention & Relationships, Mental Health, Nutrition & Wellness, Sports, and Family Engagement. The objective was to make sure that the volume of work would be identified and agreed upon by the collective ACC Student Union not just a individuals.

Once the focus areas were named the students moved the conversation into action planning for the year. Through a chalk talk exercise, 5 major activities were developed and proposed by students in an effort to identify next steps to the identified focus areas. Each team spent time at a station working on the purpose and reach of an action plan that would support the focus areas. Once each proposal was completed, the students participated in weighted voting to identify the top activities they would endorse as united student union for the Fall of 2018; engaging with decision makers and launching a mini video multimedia campaign.

The week after the ACC retreat there were two separate student convenings to follow up from the planned Fall activities. The first included a debrief session which resulted in the decision to narrow down the 9 focus areas to a more condensed list of priorities to focus on for this year. The second convening was hosted to develop the planned activities they agreed upon at the retreat, including the drafting of the district wide student survey that would accompany the priority areas. In addition drafted a plan to ensure the survey is reached far and wide to include the vast diversity of student perspectives; including foster youth, English Language learner students, students who identify as LGBTQI, newcomer youth, and more.

Student Action Research - Recommendations for Quality and Equitable Schools

As OUSD continues to engage with different stakeholders around how to create a district with quality schools in every neighborhood, in a time of declining enrollment and less resources, students continue to stay committed in bringing meaningful, data driven, recommendations for a thriving school district who serves the needs of all students, as articulated by students themselves.

Over the last decade, the All City Council Student Union has engaged their constituents in an annual peer-led youth action research process resulting in collecting data from over 3,000 students. The findings and recommendations identified over the last 11 years, speaks to much needed improvements in OUSD while also informing a student designed platform for quality and equitable schools where students are college, career, and life ready.

Student Priorities

Out of the 9 focus areas, 4 emerged as priority areas as decided by students, these include: Student Leadership Programs; College Support Programs; Teacher Quality: Recruitment, Retention & Relationships; and Mental Health, Nutrition & Wellness. Our staff team supported in identifying District departments that provide support or contribute to the student identified priorities. We recognize that some departments have no student interface but with minimal analysis from department 1 pagers, our staff team was able to categorize their priorities within the existing departments. Additionally, this process allowed for students to articulate the early stages of a vision on how our district should be organized. In their analysis, students articulated the importance of focusing the conversation of OUSD budget on what really works and not what needs to get cut. They were very critical in outlining the ongoing challenges that have existed in OUSD for generations, and although they understand that OUSD is facing many financial constraints, they simply believe they are not in a position to recommend cuts when their schools actually need more resources and support.

The results showed that 10 district departments had one or more contact point with the 9 areas students identified as important. There is deep contextual meaning that must be examined when looking at the themes that students organically developed. Each theme has examples of what this area means day- to day for students and some direct connections to specific staff and programming that will roll up to a specific district department. The following provides a narrative description on each of the 9 focus areas.

College Support Programing

There was a distinction in themes from “support centers” and “college support programing.” Students defined college support programing as things that were valuable on their current road to college admissions. College support programing provides a real and clear pathway for students to go to college. College and career centers serve as an accessible resource for students to: meet with their college counselors, answer questions, connect with additional resources, stay on top of important deadlines, and get support on personal statements, applications, and scholarships. OUSD’s partnerships with college focused programs and organization are an asset to students and increases the likelihood that student will go to college; some of the specific programs identified by students include Upward Bound, Mills College, Peers Advising Students to Succeed 2 (PASS 2), Dual Enrollment college classes, AVID, BUILD, Future Centers, AAMA’s Senior 2 Success, and East Bay College Fund. College fairs and Pathways/Academies support keeping students in thinking and planning for college. Conversely students appreciated the opportunity provided to access higher education but students recommended more programs and activities that support the financial aspect of paying for college.

One student mentioned his school day experience with filling out college applications and applying for financial aid. “On Wednesday I had my actual first financial aid ... So yeah and then they pretty much how would I go every Wednesday. From B block and I pretty much spend the time on filling applications like I’m almost done with my whole state(application). So yeah.” The entire group erupted in an applause recognizing the importance of having completed at least one college application.

From a District standpoint, the current departments that heavily impact the themes mentioned by students under college support programing include: the individual school sites should be noted as large contributors to this work; Linked Learning Office; Office of Equity; and a host of community partnerships with groups named by students above.

Quotations from focus group student participants:

- *“Students need help finding careers, what to do after high school, including if they don’t want to go to college. We need more academies, broaden a little beyond the basic academies.”*
- *“Resources to ever academy according to what they need”*

Student Leadership

Student leadership emerged as a major theme in the student discussion; we can define this including programs and services that promote a student's ability to take an active role in their education and personal advocacy. Student leadership programs strengthen students' life skills and increases their sense of belonging and understanding of who they are culturally, academically, and as a leader. All City Council (ACC), Restorative Justice (RJ), Peers Advising Students to Succeed (PASS 2), African American Male Achievement (AAMA) and student government were called out by name. Moreover, students named programs that made them feel connected and proud of their culture, inspired them to stay engaged in school and get more involved in student voice efforts, leadership roles, and in their community. In many instances, particularly with RJ, students identified their coordinator by name. Therefore, who the people are, that facilitate these programs, plays a critical role in the success of the overall culture and climate of the school, and how engaged the students are in their education. There were many students that stated they did not have a RJ coordinator and made recommendations to train all teachers in RJ so that there could be more equity at the school site. Students also identified a direct correlation between these programs to getting ready for college, career, and life. Many students expressed that these programs not only support their development and skill set as leaders and understanding their cultural and ethnic identity, they also were a resource and guide in their college and career planning.

Behavioral Health and the Office of Equity, houses All City Council, Student leadership council, Restorative Justice, and the AAMA, LSA, and APISA targeted strategies. Behavioral Health is nested in Community Schools & Student Services department. These functions are critical to the facilitation of a quality school day experience for many youth. The student recommendations to improve teacher training with segments from these two central office departments was lifted as a popular solution to the needs of students around teacher quality.

Quotations from focus group student participants:

- *"ACC (All City Council) helped me find new resources and learn new things about myself and be myself, its a welcoming space"*
- *"ACC, I've been connected since 10th grade as a Health and Wellness delegate"*
- *"RJ (Restorative Justice) helped me develop leadership skills, and has had an impact on me going to college"*
- *"RJ is a way to talk about my problems"*
- *"Latinos Unidos is how I started my own Folklorico group at school"*
- *"AAMA (African American Male Achievement) has given me the tools and path to know who I am and think of myself as a college student"*

Teacher Quality: Recruitment, Retention, and Relationships

Teacher quality and relationships are an essential features for a students all day school experience. Primarily, students believe the student to teacher relationships matter most. In examining student responses on what individual imputes have had an impact on student development we cannot overlook the interconnectedness that is observed with having quality teachers and their ability to form meaningful relationships with students. 31% of all individual responses called out a teacher by name. Students articulate clearly that teachers who look like them and represent their cultural and ethnic background contributes greatly to their openness to engagement in the classroom and school overall. Therefore investing in teacher pipeline programs for teachers of color is of high priority for students. Students believe that to retain quality teachers we need increased teacher pay and invest in providing trainings to all teachers in restorative justice principles of circle keeping and making classroom time and the environment engaging.

The Talent Division, the Office Of Equity's teachers of color recruitment pipeline initiative, English Language learning +English Language arts, and the Elementary, Middle and High School Networks are all central office departments that have direct interface with the hiring, training and support of teachers in schools.

Quotations from focus group student participants:

- *"Teachers with close relationships"*
- *"Teachers who share same background as me. Last year I had two teachers who pushed me to do new things – Southeast Asian conference at UCB and CHAMPS, they encouraged me to explore."*
- *"Teachers who have your same background are more likely to care about you."*
- *"Student-teacher relationships – very few very cool teachers."*
- *"Short of staff – front office lady teaches Spanish subs the Algebra II class."*
- *"Teachers don't know our names after few weeks of school".*
- *"Pay teachers more. Teacher who left cannot afford rent, moved to a cheaper place."*
- *"Teachers don't know where students are coming from or what they're facing. More teachers of color who can relate to us. More training for teachers, new to community like community walk."*
- *"Teachers and students don't speak outside of class, not understand where students are coming from, have pressures outside of school plus the school work. Meetings once a month where teachers have to participate and interact with students."*
- *Restorative Justice. Train all teachers in restorative justice, not just the facilitator."*
- *"More teachers that look like us"*
- *"how do we address ineffective teachers?"*

Mental Health, Nutrition, and Wellness

Mental health, nutrition, and wellness emerged as a priority for students, lifting the critical role this has on student's ability to move from in dire need of support or sustainable to thriving. The stress of school, home, college, paying for college, relationships weigh on students heavily and without the professional supports that are offered in school many students would have a tough time getting through difficult situations. Students also named the vital role of quality school lunch and supper has on their school day experience, including the ability to concentrate in class and on their school work. SEL training was also lifted by students. In this dimensions students had more questions than recommendations. Inquiries like: How does an athlete manage stress when they have a lot of work to do and practice? How many students feel stressed out by High School? What impact does this have on their education?

Behavioral Health, the Health and Wellness, Health Services, and Nutrition Services are all departments that are directly supporting students in the area of Mental Health, Nutrition and Wellness. Some students mentioned programs and teachers by name and noted that being able to go to this teacher's space during lunch give students a place to be calm and happy.

Quotations from focus group student participants:

- *"Students feel like they are not capable of succeeding. No one is pushing them, or they are going through personal stuff and people bringing them down. We need more counselors. 1 or 2 counselors for so many students is not enough."*
- *"Downside, I lost close friends who passed away because they were murdered."*
- *"Supper is sometimes the only hot meal students have in the evenings and supports us in staying engaged in after school programs and sports"*

Sports

The theme of sports emerged from students as something that was extremely beneficial for their character development and self-esteem. Students asked for the need to increase and retain sport opportunities in our schools. Some students spoke of leveraging their involvement in sports to improve their body image decrease stress, increase confidence, and supports in making them feel like they are part of a community. . In a discussion about the meaning of sports one student expressed " Yeah for me personally I felt like sports really gave me an image. If you don't know what an issue is it's like the right environment. So you want to give me the right environment really help me grow so fresh I start." Other students noted volleyball, gym, and P.E. teachers were some specific items that had an impact on student development. Having a football team at their school, and more sport opportunities were things students wanted to see more of.

Community Schools & Student Services currently houses the Oakland Athletic League (OAL) Sports are extremely important to student development therefore we can say that OAL are the District departments that service this category for students.

Quotations from focus group student participants:

- *“Need more unity and bonding. Joining a sport or club can help, you have to work together and get to know each other.”*

Student Support Centers

Student support center is a broad category which has a range of student responses. An overarching definition of what we can use to define support centers would be destinations, classes or programs at a school site that improve the school day experience for students. Student support centers provide valuable resources to students including: academic support such as tutoring; leadership and civic engagement opportunities; jobs and job training skill development, advising and counseling on life, mental health, well-being; future centers that focus on college and career readiness; community building and multiracial bonding conversations; libraries and access to media resources. Some of the best services are also peer-led. Mentors, case managers and advisors were frequently mentioned, sometimes by name. Students talk about the essential role that counselors play in their development, one student states “we have a wellness center that's where there is therapy and it can come from mentors... guidance counselors, academic counselors are supported by our health or they will just help you get a job.”

We see lots of central office overlap in this area with departments like the High School Linked Learning department, Afterschool programs, school site teachers, counseling and a host of external community organizations that are coming into OUSD schools to support students. Students that need additional support with Special Education, Homelessness, and those with foster status would also access these central office departments.

Quotations from focus group student participants:

- *“Youth center is a safe haven on campus. Snacks, filtered water, best smelling bathrooms.”*
- *“Futures center help me with internships and scholarships”*
- *“The college career information center, thankful to have that space”*
- *“Not every school has a Future Center – where student-led activities like understanding the A-G requirements”*

Family Engagement

The theme of Family engagement includes a student’s support system in their academic journey. Students expressed how important their families were to them and how too their families need support and education to successfully navigate the bureaucratic systems inside of OUSD. Mothers, fathers, and/or step parents were critical for student success at school and providing resources that will aid them in supporting their child(ren) on their education is highly needed.

The concept of relationships was explicitly expressed. From a central office standpoint the Office of Communications and Family Engagement, which lives inside of The Office of Equity were logical connections to these areas of work. Parent engagement workshops, academic workshops, back to school nights, how to get involved in decisions made at schools sites and district, and multilingual resources are at the essence of what students expressed as a priority. It should be noted that the Student Enrollment Office has a huge family facing dimension with school choice and intake across our system; particularly for new families and at transition grades. Also, some students and families who have additional legal challenges need the support will access the Juvenile Justice department and Transitional Students which lives inside of Community Schools & Student Services department for OUSD.

Quotations from focus group student participants:

- *“Students and parents don’t know what’s going on in schools or in community – more information and communications are valuable.”*

Extended / Experiential Learning

Extended / Experiential learning are community based programs that students gain access to through their school site to support in exposing students to other services and skills linked to being community ready. Programs like Teens on Target, Summer Search, MISSY, Youth Together, and BUILD are youth development organizations that partner with certain schools. Students want to see more funding allocated for field trips and more resources for art and design. One of the most highly mentioned resource articulated by students were paid internships. The ability for students to get real life job readiness skills while getting paid decreases the chances of students joining the retail workforce that often times takes them out of their academic focus; having students spend more time working vs. studying.

The Office of Equity, High School Linked Learning, and Summer Learning Programs all have a division that concentrates on matching student with the appropriate community partner for supplemental services. School sites, while not listed as a district department are also critical. Students did mention that the same warm introduction or partnerships are not consistent across school sites.

Quotations from focus group student participants:

- *“Internships. We need more paid internships and more knowledge about internship options”*

Enrichment Classes

Enrichment classes was defined by students as classes that focus on life readiness skills and curriculum that allows for self expression, including arts and ethnic studies. Students recognized enrichment classes as something that is critical but lacking across district.

The Linked Learning Office, which houses the work of Ethnic Studies, Expanded Learning, housed under Community Schools & Student Service, the High School Network, and the Office of Equity, which houses Manhood Development Program and target strategies, are vital departments in supporting with the quality and quantity of enrichment classes.

Quotations from focus group student participants:

- *“We need ethnic studies classes for all students”*
- *“We need more art classes to support our freedom of expression. This also helps our mental health”*

Where We Need To Grow

In addition to asking students what has been the most valuable, many students elaborated on the aspects of OUSD that need improvements and that they wanted to see more of in their District.

- *“Homophobia. The organizations we are a part of have talks about equality among students, including race, gender identity, sexual preference”*
- *“There is a lack of unity.”*
- *“The level of students engaged in social issues is low. My solution is we need more district-wide events that are student centered, like have a party and address what’s happening. This can address racial inequities.”*
- *“Racial inequities. We need to bring different students together, see similarities and differences.”*
- *“More clubs would promote engagement.”*
- *“Segregation racially and academically. We need a multiracial identity. Newcomers are not mixed with us.”*
- *“We need unity and community building – unity of classmates.”*
- *“Social Emotional learning training”*
- *“Better teachers”*
- *“More field trip funding”*
- *“Teachers should involve themselves more”*
- *“Teachers that are people of color”*
- *“More pay for HS teachers”*
- *“Ethnic studies classes”*
- *“Big bank take little bank- More paid internships”*
- *“More internship opportunities”*
- *“More clubs”*
- *“More information about summer programs”*
- *“More time in school dedicated to college funding/ financial aid”*
- *“More sport opportunities”*
- *“Entrepreneurship”*
- *“All teachers trained in RJ (Restorative Justice)”*

OUSD Department Alignment

Each of the aforementioned categories were identified by students as existing and critical to their development and success in OUSD. Below you will see each student category housing one or more current OUSD department.

Legend



-  - Student identified them and selected area of work for 2018-19
-  - Student identified theme only



Figure 1: District departments that support student themes of sports, support center and College support programing.

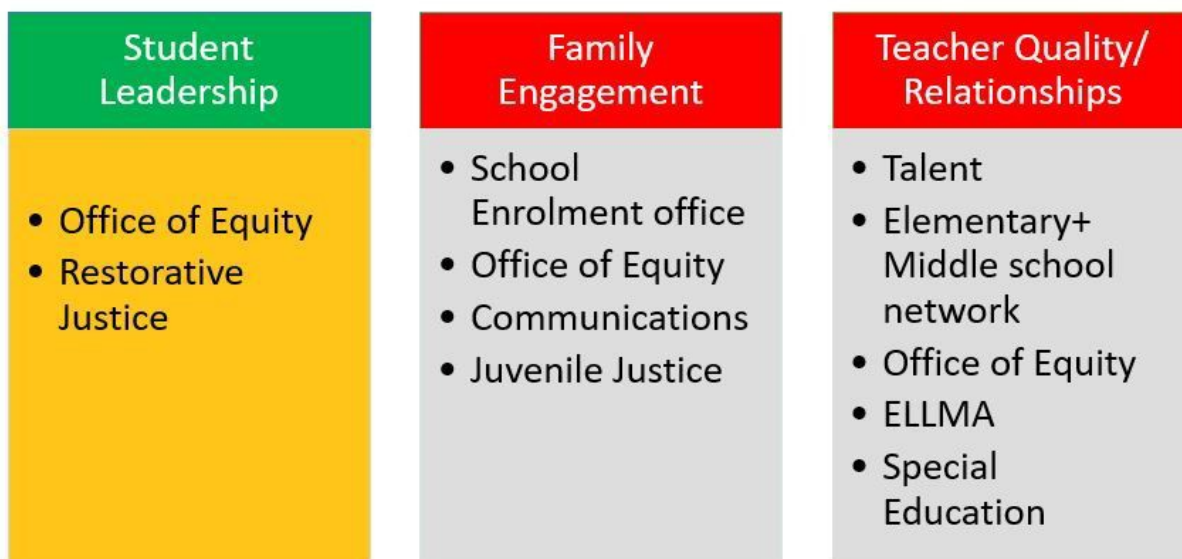


Figure 2: District departments that support student themes of Student Leadership, Family Engagement, Teacher Quality Relationships.



Figure 3: District departments that support student themes of Extended / Experiential Learning, Enrichment Classes* Mental Health & Wellness.

* Enrichment classes were identified as something missing but desired by students.

Additional ACC Decisions

There were other aspects of the retreat that were utilized to construct goals, forum decisions and create action steps for the remainder of the year. One of them being an ACC unanimous endorsement of Measure AA which is the Oakland’s Children Initiative for the November 2018 ballot. The vote of yes would provide an additional 30 million in annual revenue to expand access to high quality preschool and support older students with college access k mentorship, and scholarship support services.

Conclusion

Placing student voice at the center of the budget process would allow for critical guidance on what is working well and what is in dire need of improvement. All City Council is equipped to be a meaningful partner in this process and is committed to improving our education in Oakland with Student First and Equity in mind. It is important to note that ACC has compiled a lengthy list of critical strategies as recommendations to many of the stated issues. The recommendations expands from ACC’s annual youth action research since 2008.

As stated, the All City Council student union leaders are committed to continue engaging students in this process while also gathering more students voices through a student designed District wide student survey, which will be available in multiple languages for middle school and high school students. This body of work has been the guide for the development of the essential questions that will be lifted in the student survey. This peer feedback will serve as the OUSD student voice which is critical if OUSD is to become more student centered. In conclusion, if we are going to put students first, as a district our organizational structure should reflect what is important to students. We hope that these recommendations can contribute towards the guidance of this process and also uplifts years of student voice.