

Randolph Ward Statement  
Phase II – School Interventions – “No Child Left Behind”  
State Administrator/Board Meeting  
Jan. 12, 2005

There are two handouts for this portion of the meeting, a Summary sheet of the Request for Letters of Intent, and a Call to Action document. I will be referring to these documents in my remarks.

Back in our October meeting, our School Intervention Team outlined the need to intervene in two groups of schools, one group primarily due to enrollment losses, and a second group primarily due to several years of poor academic performance as defined by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. We decided to separate the interventions needed into two phases. At our December board meeting, we addressed Phase I – schools needing intervention due primarily to enrollment losses. Today we address Phase II – interventions needed in schools to improve academic performance and comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

First, let's start at the beginning. As we all recognize, our responsibility is to provide a high quality learning environment for all of the children in our care. Even without the requirements of NCLB, we have that responsibility. Our students deserve nothing less. We also operate within a specific environment. It has been in the news lately and we are all well aware that California public schools do not receive the funding that we would like to educate our children. We are aware that several districts are faced with similar challenges. However, our responsibility to the children remains.

This Phase II is about how we meet that responsibility.

As I mentioned at the December Board meeting, we have 13 elementary school programs in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of needing Program Improvement as defined and required by NCLB. This means we have 13 schools where either, a) less than 13.6% of students were at grade level in English Language Arts, b) less than 16% of students were at grade level in math, or, c) one or more subgroups have not met these percentage levels in English or math.

As the Summary sheet indicates, by fall of 2005, NCLB requires us to use one or more of five options in our efforts to improve academic performance for all children at these schools. Each of these options requires a major restructuring and fundamental change at the school site. I want thank our staff for organizing several community meetings throughout the district that informed hundreds of parents, teachers and community members of these options and the challenges ahead. This has been very tough news for all of us and we acknowledge our need to continue improving the timeliness and effectiveness of our communications as we move forward. Many excellent questions arose from these meetings. We attempted to address them and will continue to do so.

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, we released the Request for Letters of Interest we are discussing this afternoon to solicit ideas to successfully restructure the 13 schools in Program

Improvement Year 4 under NCLB. We believe this broad solicitation has the greatest opportunity to bring us successful ideas and we are actively encouraging capable individuals and organizations participate.

The Summary sheet highlights the groups being solicited and the process, but there a couple of recurring questions I want to address now.

- We are seeking letters of interest at this point and not full proposals. We recognize that we have a short timeframe. As indicated in the timeline provided, we are first seeking Letters of Interest to identify high potential candidates and those letters are due by Feb 1<sup>st</sup>. After letters are reviewed, promising candidates will be invited to submit a full proposal due in late March.
- As one of the groups being solicited, we are soliciting letters of interest from charter school organizations and contract school operators. There seems to be some confusion about this, but I want to assure the public that accepted proposals will need to be consistent with our Statement of Beliefs as presented in the Call to Action. Specifically, we will be looking for, among other things,
  - Letters and then proposals that have substantial promise of enabling schools to make dramatic improvements in academic performance for all students
  - An attractive and sustainable environment for high quality teachers
  - Fair access to all Oakland students, including students in special education programs, and
  - Parent and community involvement to leverage all available resources

The full 33-page Request for Letters of Interest is available on the District website and at the Office of Public Information.

As indicated in the Call to Action, we believe that the education of our children is the responsibility of the entire district – OUSD employees, parents, students, community members and civic, business and community-based institutions. We know that to create the environment our children deserve, we must fully tap these resources and behave differently ourselves. By using these collective resources, we have already begun responding to our challenges through the creation of new, smaller school environments to better serve students. We are also engaged in a complete overhaul of the district central office organization to provide better service in support of schools. We need best ideas and efforts of everyone involved to be successful. Our students deserving nothing less!