

**OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

REPORT ON YOUTH VENTURES JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

I. INTRODUCTION

This report from the Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the Board of Education (“Board”) of the Oakland Unified School District (“OUSD”) responds to a request from the Board regarding the Youth Ventures Joint Powers Authority (“JPA”). Specifically, Director Kakishiba requested a report on:

- Efficacy of the JPA in addressing and meeting the strategic priorities of OUSD, particularly as embodied in OUSD’s recently adopted Strategic Direction for *Community Schools, Thriving Students*; and
- Proposals to modify the JPA’s mission, purpose, membership, and/or governance structure that reflect the greater alignment to the strategic priorities of the school district.

This report:

- Reviews the mission and structure of the JPA;
- Analyzes whether the mission comports with OUSD’s strategic priorities;
- Recommends options for the Board moving forward in its relationship with the JPA.

Those options include:

- Maintain the status quo;
- Request certain modifications to the operating and governance structure to better align the work of the JPA with OUSD’s priorities;
- Terminate membership in the JPA.

II. YOUTH VENTURES JPA MISSION AND STRUCTURE

The Youth Ventures JPA was formed in 2006. In December 2006, the OUSD State Administrator approved OUSD’s membership. Other members of the JPA at its founding included the City of Oakland, the County of Alameda, and the East Bay Community Foundation. Subsequently, the San Lorenzo Unified School District has joined the JPA. The Youth Ventures JPA grew out of collaborative efforts undertaken by multiple organizations and individuals and sponsored by a non-profit organization, Safe Passages.

The stated goals of the JPA are many. Attachment A includes Resolution 06-1249, which authorized OUSD’s membership in the JPA. Among the 22 purposes in the authorizing resolution are:

1. Develop, advocate, and implement effective policy that promotes improvements in the health and well-being of children, families, and youth within cities and counties as a whole.
2. Advocate for system change to eliminate bureaucratic barriers to providing services for the children, youth and families who need them.

3. Promote and facilitate the cross-jurisdictional coordination of efforts targeting children, families and youth to reduce duplication of effort.
4. Maximize both new and existing resources dedicated to children, youth and families.

Other purposes include building capacity within member jurisdictions to undertake innovative strategies, promoting data sharing between member jurisdictions, identifying and pursuing resource opportunities, sharing data and best practices, and generally promoting collaboration. Any member reserves the right to decline to implement the JPA's recommended practices and policies at schools and/or sites.

The JPA has among its powers the power to enter into contracts; incur debts, liabilities, and obligations; receive contributions; apply for, receive, and disburse grants, loans, and other funding sources; employ agents, contracts, or employees. The JPA is required to set annual performance goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes, and make quarterly and annual reports available to the public.

Each charter member of the JPA (OUSD, City of Oakland, County of Alameda) makes an annual financial contribution of \$150,000. San Lorenzo Unified makes an annual contribution of \$25,000. The three founding members each have five votes on the Board of Trustees.¹ The East Bay Community Foundation has one vote "to institutionalize the role of philanthropy in the JPA." San Lorenzo Unified has two votes.

The JPA since its inception has been staffed by individuals who also work for Safe Passages. According to its web site: "Safe Passages is an inter-governmental partnership including the City of Oakland, the County of Alameda, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), philanthropy and community-based partners that is committed to advocating for children, youth, and families with a special emphasis on vulnerable populations within the County of Alameda." Safe Passages was founded in 1998. Based on information on the Safe Passages web site, some individuals affiliated with Safe Passages consider the JPA to be a vehicle by which Safe Passages can better pursue its goals. This is exemplified by a statement from the Safe Passages web site:

To institutionalize the unprecedented partnership, the Board of Safe Passages also decided to create a sustainable organizational structure now embodied in the Youth Ventures Joint Powers Authority, an autonomous, public, multi-agency government entity authorized under California Government Code, focused on children and youth throughout Alameda County. This new entity will not only continue to serve residents of the City of Oakland but it would also expand the efforts to other high need communities within the County of Alameda.

¹ Between 2006 and 2009, while under State Administration, OUSD's seats on the JPA Board were filled by the State Administrator, a senior staff member, and three Board members. Since returning to local control, OUSD's seats have been filled by the Superintendent, a senior staff member, and three Board members (through June 2010), and subsequently the Superintendent and three Board members, with one seat unfilled. Other charter members fill their seat with a combination of senior staff and elected officials, as well.

The Joint Powers Agreement does not reflect this interdependency with Safe Passages. Nowhere in the JPA Agreement is there mention of Safe Passages, beyond noting that the charter members of the JPA participate "...in the national Urban Health Initiative, locally implemented through the Safe Passages partnership, which focuses on collaboration and systems changes to improve the health and safety of young children and older youth in urban communities." The memo that accompanied the JPA Agreement when the question of OUSD membership was originally raised in December 2006 does review in some detail the history of the work of Safe Passages, and explore costs and benefits.

III. JPA's MISSION AND OUSD's STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In June 2010, the OUSD Board adopted a new Strategic Direction: *Community Schools, Thriving Students*. The OUSD Strategic Direction states OUSD's mission and vision is: "All students will graduate. As a result, they are caring, competent, and critical thinkers, fully-informed, engaged and contributing citizens, and prepared to succeed in college and career. To achieve this vision, the OUSD Strategic Direction identified three strategic priorities

- ❖ **Safe, healthy, and supportive schools.** Oakland will become a full-service community school district that will collaborate with civic and community partners to reduce violence in the community and schools, thereby creating secure campuses where a culture of calm prevails.
- ❖ **High quality effective instruction.** Oakland will improve academic outcomes for all students and in particular our most historically least well-served.
- ❖ **College and career readiness literacy.** Students will read, write, speak, think critically, and reason mathematically for 21st century success.

The JPA's structure brings together OUSD with City and County counterparts who provide many of the health, public safety, and other social services for OUSD students and families that support OUSD's goal to become a full-service community district. In order to realize this potential, however, OUSD must provide more direction to the JPA in identifying how the JPA can best help OUSD achieve its goals.

The JPA Board in recent months has expressed interest in evaluating whether the JPA is effectively meeting the goals of all members. The November 15, 2010 JPA meeting included an extensive discussion of the need to better define the decision making process of the JPA and roles and responsibilities. In particular, JPA Board members asked a sub-committee of the Board to come back in January 2011 with recommendations for differentiating the work of Safe Passages from the work of the JPA. Many JPA Board members expressed an interest in the JPA functioning as a place for policy discussions, and also to pursue funding opportunities based on all available resources in Alameda County. JPA Board members requested more meaningful discussions on how to work with all the community based organizations in the area. The interest is to leverage the JPA to achieve goals mutually agreed upon by the JPA Board.

IV. OPTIONS FOR OUSD MOVING FORWARD

The JPA Agreement, taken at face value, appears to support OUSD's goals. Of particular import, the JPA purposes stated above directly support OUSD's goal of becoming a full service

community district. The JPA structure – independent of the current JPA administration – creates a place where key players in the delivery of many of the services necessary in a full service community district come together. The JPA structure also provides a mechanism for OUSD, the City, and the County to pursue funding opportunities. Anecdotally many JPA Board members have noted that the structure of this JPA is unprecedented in the U.S. in terms of bringing key players together formally. While to date funding opportunities have been pursued primarily with Safe Passages, there is nothing in the JPA memorandum of understanding that restricts the JPA from working with whatever organizations are best suited to the particular purposes of a funding opportunity. Additionally, many JPA Board members have stated at JPA Board meetings that a key value for them in the JPA is having a time and place for discussion and collaboration.

Some may wish to argue for OUSD to dissolve its membership in the JPA. It may be possible to provide this level of collaboration without paying dues and JPA staff. There is no reason the Safe Passages non-profit cannot continue its programs without the JPA. Each member organization, if not part of the JPA, could repurpose the funds it otherwise provides for JPA dues.

Options for OUSD moving forward are provided below.

- ❖ **Maintain the status quo.** Under this option, OUSD would continue its membership without taking any further action.
- ❖ **Request certain modifications to the operating and governance structure to better align the work of the JPA with OUSD's priorities.** Under this option, OUSD would outline to the JPA its priorities and identify how the JPA can best assist OUSD in achieving those priorities. OUSD might also request that the JPA modify its operating and/or governance structure. A primary modification OUSD could offer is that the JPA establish a new three person 501(c)3 staffing structure to facilitate the leadership and resource development efforts of the JPA. This team would work solely at the direction of the JPA and would facilitate the funding and integration of efforts that support the mission of the JPA focused on the well-being of children and families in Alameda County. This option seizes the opportunity to address concerns about the current non-profit structure. Current concerns expressed by OUSD Board members include lack of clarity about the large size and role of Safe Passages in relation to the JPA and that Safe Passages has grown into a competitor as a service provider. Pursuing this option would allow OUSD to improve an existing partnership structure that convenes many of the entities that are important to OUSD achieving its goals for children and families, as outlined in the Strategic Direction. OUSD could structure this input with timelines that allow OUSD to evaluate whether it wishes to continue its participation within the OUSD 2011-2012 budget development cycle.
- ❖ **Terminate membership in the JPA.** Under this option, OUSD would discontinue its membership in the JPA. This would free up the funds currently spent on JPA membership. Withdrawing from the JPA before attempting to correct aspects that may be considered problematic could carry a political cost for OUSD with the other charter members. At a time when OUSD is reaching out as never before to bolster community

support, OUSD may not wish to alienate key players. Were OUSD to pursue this option, it might consider concurrently establishing a different venue that continues to bring together these key players.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Intergovernmental Relations Committee recommends that the Board adopt the second option above: request certain modifications to the operating and governance structure to better align the work of the JPA with OUSD's priorities. The Committee recommends that the Board be specific about its concerns and how any requested modifications will better meet OUSD's priorities.