

Oakland Unified School District • Board of Education

# Theory of Action

## Discussion & Exploration

presented for Board discussion for the December 14, 2011 Regular Board Meeting

### I. CONCEPT

The theory of action is a framework for the district to ensure that our policies, decisions, and work are aligned and drive toward the same outcomes for all students and families. This theory reflects the mission, vision, and values of the organization. The Board of Education uses this theory of action as a *macro-level guide* to develop high-level policies which the organization operationalizes through design, decision making, and implementation. Embedded in the theory of action are key principles of equity, sustainability, scalability, fiscal and academic solvency, and maximizing the potential of every public school student in Oakland.

### II. BACKGROUND & REFERENCES

This draft theory of action paper for Board discussion enhances and builds upon previously adopted Board policies. The Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has discussed and adopted policies related to strategic priorities and school-based decision-making in service of high quality teaching and student achievement. For relevant discussion references, please see: *School Site Decision-Making Policy: A Policy to Promote High Quality Teaching and High Student Achievement* (Draft 3A, Oakland Unified School District; June 9, 1999) and *Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning & Achievement* (OUSD, Legislative File ID No. 09-6666; January 14, 2009).

### III. STRATEGIC PLAN – *Community Schools, Thriving Students*

The Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) believes that all students deserve a high quality education that prepares them for academic success and for social, emotional, and physical well-being. In June 2011, the Board of Education of OUSD adopted the following vision for all of its students:

All students will graduate from high school. 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 accomplish this, we adopted a mission for OUSD to serve the whole child, eliminate inequity, and provide each child with excellent teachers for every day. This district strategy requires all schools to become Full Service Community Schools that ensure every student will:

- Attend a SAFE, HEALTHY, and SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL, that collaborates with civic and community partners to reduce violence in the community and schools, thereby creating secure campuses where a culture of calm prevails. (Goal Area 1)
- Learn the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be PREPARED for SUCCESS in COLLEGE and CAREERS when they graduate from high school, to ensure that they can read, write, speak, think critically, and reason mathematically for post-secondary success. (Goal Area 2)
- Have HIGH QUALITY and EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION with excellent teachers for every day of the school year. (Goal Area 3)

## DRAFT • For Board Discussion

To support each Full Service Community School, OUSD will:

- Become a FULL SERVICE COMMUNITY DISTRICT that is *in service of* and fully supporting the success of community schools and thriving students. (Goal Area 4)
- Be ACCOUNTABLE for HIGH QUALITY for its schools and in its work across the organization. (Goal Area 5)

### IV. THEORY of ACTION • MACRO-LEVEL FRAMEWORK

With a universal set of desired student outcomes and performance standards based on the *Community Schools, Thriving Students* strategic plan, we want to move decisively and fundamentally to transform our district. We recognize that incremental changes will not create the conditions for success for all.

We adopted a strategic plan that outlines the fundamental changes required to fulfill this vision for our future, and that takes sequenced steps that must be planned and evaluated to move us powerfully to create such educational opportunities in each Oakland neighborhood. Some of these changes are in existing systems that will be reviewed, improved, and institutionalized, including: new school incubation; results based budgeting; regional networking of schools; and the Options school choice process. Other proposed changes are new systems that address specific aspects of fundamental change: African American Male Achievement; Linked Learning in High Schools; RTTI; quality school reviews; and powerful scorecard tools for district accountability.

The document begins our Board discussion for a comprehensive theory of action that guides the Board in its policy-making and decision-making. The Board of Education hereby endorses this macro-level framework:

- IF we use our adopted sets of criteria for high quality and effective academic and social support for students,
- AND we ensure that there is high-quality and effective instruction in every classroom that results in high-quality learning for every student,
- AND in service of high and equitable standards and outcomes for students, we maximize school site-based decision-making regarding staffing, finances, calendars, and programs,
- AND to ensure high quality options in every neighborhood, we partner with diverse providers in alignment with our criteria,
- AND we ensure that all facilities are used in service of quality outcomes for students, including constructing and maintaining facilities in accordance with principles of sustainability,
- AND we apply our adopted sets of criteria in ways that maximize fiscal and academic opportunities by operating a central office and the number and type of schools that we can sustain over time,
- AND we include and partner with the community and families to ensure quality options in each neighborhood throughout Oakland,
- THEN Oakland public schools will operate on principles of equity and ensure that all students have the academic, social, and fiscal supports that they need to succeed.