

# Oakland Unified School District Meaningful Student Engagement

## 100% Prepared for Life After High School!

Da Town Researchers: Building Improvement in Our Education

Year 3: 2008-2009

### Student Researchers:

Noemi Bravo

Ellissia Hill

Jenny Nguyen

Tony Robinson

Fatima Duran

Antoine Pope

Larica Jacko

Mykayla Wells

& All City Council

# Who We Are...

- **DATA TOWN RESEARCHERS** are a group of 8 students from different Oakland high schools who do action research on how to improve Oakland Schools.
- **MSE (Meaningful Student Engagement)** is a community-won initiative that is a part of **OUSD (Oakland Unified School District)** that helps to increase student leadership and engagement in schools. We work in collaboration with **All City Council** student leaders.
- **YOUTH IN FOCUS** is a nonprofit organization that trains young people to do participatory action research in their community.

**OUSD Meaningful Student Engagement  
ALL CITY COUNCIL Student Leaders  
& School Site Leadership Classes**



**COMMUNITY ALLIES:**

Californians for Justice, AIWA  
Youth Build Immigrant Power,  
AYPAL, Youth Together

**TOWN  
RESEARCHERS**

Student Evaluation Team  
supported by  
Youth In Focus  
Education Justice  
Initiative

## Our Action Research Process...

1. Orientation & Teambuilding
2. Research Design
  - Develop Research Questions
  - Choose & Create Research Tools: Surveys, Photo Voice, and Focus Group Guides
3. Data Collection, Entry & Organization
4. Data Analysis
5. Community Presentations & Action!

# 2008-2009 Research Questions

## What should Oakland Schools offer to prepare students to be effective community members?

- What does quality teaching look like to support this vision?
- What will keep students motivated to attend and succeed in school?
- What resources are available & need to be prioritized to support this vision?

# Our Sample: Where We Did Our Research...

- **Met West**
- **Oakland High**
- **Far West**
- **Oakland Technical High School**
- **Rudsdale Continuation**
- **Castlemont Business and Information Technology**
- **Skyline**
- **Youth Empowerment School**
- **Fremont Architecture Academy**
- **Castlemont East Oakland School of The Arts**
- **Ralph Bunche Continuation**
- **Fremont Paul Robeson Media Academy**
- **Envision Academy**

# Student Surveys

We conducted over 500 student surveys in over 25 classrooms at 13 schools.

## Sample Questions:

- **Multiple Choice:** What do you want from school counselors?
- **Yes or No:** Do your Teachers & Administrators make school a motivational place to come to everyday?
- **Free Response:** What is the school doing to help you be an effective community member?

# □ Student Focus Groups

With the help of ACC & CFJ, we ran 9 focus groups with over 45 students, where students talked about what school offers them to succeed toward 100% the goal of graduation and preparedness.

## Sample Questions:

- 1) Do your school staff ( teachers, administrators, counselors) provide you with useful resources to meet your goals?
- 2) What are the most important skills that you need to succeed in college, career and life?
- 3) What is your vision for Oakland schools?



# 100% Photovoice Project

**GOAL: Capture 20 “REAL” & 20 “IDEAL” photos**

**What are the “REAL” problems at this school?**

- *What exists at this school to discourage students and push them out?*
- *What resources are lacking in this school?*

**What are the “IDEAL” visions at this school?**

- *What are school staff doing to help meet the needs of students?*
- *What resources does this school need more of to succeed?*

# Some “REAL Problems” Photos...



# Some “IDEAL Visions” Photos...



## Finding #1

# Dropping Out & Motivation

Over 40% of students that we surveyed don't feel that teachers and administrators make school a motivational place to attend. On top of this, financial problems, stress, and family issues contribute to many students considering dropping out of school.

- A student said, “Some teachers just teach horribly and cannot get through the curriculum. They also don’t care for us, they treat us like cows: we work, they let us out.”
- Almost a quarter of students we surveyed have considered dropping out of school.

## Finding #2

### College Preparation

A large % of the student population is not being prepared for college admission and access for UC and CSU schools, when large majority of student wants to go to college.

- 52% don't know if A-G requirements are offered at their schools.
- One student said, "Teachers and Adult Allies should teach us more about the college process."

### Finding #3

**Preparation for Life, College & Work  
Less than 1/2 of Oakland Schools that we surveyed offer Internship Opportunities & Mentoring Programs. Students would like their schools to cooperate with community organizations to prepare students for life.**

- 88% said they want to see more community organizations getting involved in their schools.
- 57% want curriculum that is related more to their lives, is more hands-on and engaging.

Finding #4

## Teacher Quality

**Students want more money spent on getting and developing better teachers.**

- 65% of student said they want OUSD to spend more money on better teachers.
- Good Teachers: “Believe in me,” are “Supportive,” “Care,” and “ Push me,”
- Bad Teachers: “Only care about who’s on track,” “Don’t care,” are “Boring”, and “Not fun.”

Finding #5

## Continuation Schools

**Continuation students have less resources compared to comprehensive and small schools to succeed in life after high school.**

A student from a Focus Group at Rudsdale said,  
“We have classes where you don’t get the essence of what it is they’re teaching, therefore you are going to go to college and be lost. We don’t have trigonometry, we don’t have AP classes, we don’t have calculus, you feel me, where’s algebra two, where’s the real economics class that’s going to get us the basics.”



## Finding #6

### Student Decision Making & Voice

**When prioritizing what would make them more engaged in school, students said having their voices heard was the most important.**

- Out of 12 options, the two most popular were students making decisions (68%) and internships/jobs (61%) in OUSD to include student voice throughout the district.
- A student said: "I think about [dropping out] all the time because the school doesn't really let us express ourselves. The only way we can express ourselves is if the school will benefit from it."

# Our Vision:

- Students are on all **decision making bodies** in OUSD.
- All schools have **equal access** to rigorous, high-level classes, no matter the size of school, race, and gender of students.
- **Resources** for all: Technology, Quality Books & Supplies, Credentialed & Supported Teachers, Preparation Programs.
- We CAN reach the goal of **100% Graduation** & Preparation.
- All students are able to access college & **succeed academically**.
- All teachers have one-on-one relationships with students, and engage students through **relevant curriculum**.
- Students are effective community leaders **for positive social change** and learn how to run the city of Oakland.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1) MEANINGFUL COUNSELING PROGRAMS:

- We need strong, caring counselors to help us not only with college and career, but also life mentoring.
- Counselors follow students from middle to high school.
- An online system where students develop academic work plans and set goals, track progress on A-H classes, make appointments with counselors, register complaints, and get related information.

## 2) CURRICULUM TO PREPARE US:

- Cross-coordination across classes.
- Learning about OUR History & Literature: Ethnic Studies
- Establish meaningful internships for EVERY STUDENT to experience within 4 years of high school.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 3) STUDENT DECISION MAKING:

- Master schedule classes & curriculum
- Hiring & evaluating teachers and administrators
- Developing campus improvement projects
- Code of Conduct development & implementation

## 4) SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PROGRAMS:

- Organizations partner with teachers in classes
- Summits to present partner work & choose in the spring
- Community in schools, and schools in the community

## 5) MORE RESOURCES FOR MOST STRUGGLING STUDENTS:

- Focus on Continuation schools, ELL students & Special Ed students
- Provide real assessments for struggling students
- Heavily resourced counseling & curriculum based on assessment

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6) QUALITY TEACHING INITIATIVE:

- New teachers should shadow highly-ranked teachers
- Teacher Pipeline for Oakland students
- There should be a student-led classes & students as aides
- Community-led professional development

## 7) COLLEGE LEVEL RIGOR IN HIGH SCHOOL:

- A-H classes with student voice in implementation
- More AP classes & teachers in all schools

# Action Steps

- Work with All City Council to implement recommendations.
- Present to and follow-up with School Board Members & Administrators to resource our ideas and make them happen!
- Make a video for public education.
- Network with different groups around the country at AERA, May 13<sup>th</sup> CQE 100% Action, and Free Minds, Free People.

# Project Reflections

- Our research process is more powerful and effective when we collaborate other youth organizations.
- Students want to be challenged in school, and they want the resources to succeed.
- Improving quality of teaching requires student voice & needs to be at the foundation of any reform.
- The issues we face in Oakland are really similar to other cities, so we have to learn from each other.

# Da Town Researchers



I'm Jenny Nguyen, I go to Oakland High School, currently a sophomore (15 years old), and I'm really outgoing, active, and busy. Basically I'm trying to help and change the community.

**My name is Tony Robinson, and I am currently a freshman at Laney College in Oakland. My major is Business and Administration and my minor is Political Science. I work at YIF as a Project Developer.**

**Hello All. My name is Ellissia Hill. I am a senior at MetWest High School. I love to sail and help people of all kinds in any way possible. In the Fall, I will be attending a 4-year college, where my intent is to get a double major.**



**Antoine is a 16 year old junior at Oakland School for the Arts. This is his first year with the Town Researchers, but he has enjoyed every minute of it. It's been a pleasure for him to step up and be a positive change in the community.**



My name is Noemi Bravo. I'm a Junior currently attending Envision Academy. I like going to school, learning new things, and also participating in different student clubs and programs, like CORO and GSA.



My name is Larica Fantasia Jacko, and I am a 9th grader at Far West High School. I love school, I am very intelligent, and my favorite subjects are science and math. I am very independent, but yet I still can manage to be a part of a group. And that's why I enjoy working with Youth In Focus. I am a very outgoing individual and I have a very positive attitude about most things. I am oh so mature for my age, and I love to learn.

We would like to appreciate Fatima Duran, a senior at Oakland School of the Arts, and Mykayla Wells, a freshman at Oakland School of the Arts, who helped along the way as part of our research team.

## All City Council Student Researchers

**Andrew Wilson – ACC President**

**Le'Jon Issac – ACC Vice President**

**Jenny Nguyen – ACC Secretary**

**Elissia Hill – ACC Treasurer**

**Cecilia Lopez - Student Director**

**Shannon Chase - Student Director**

**Lien – ACC Media Director**

**Marcus – ACC Parliamentarian**

**Alexandra Grant – ACC Historian**

# Special Thanks to...

- Lailan Huen (Youth In Focus Coordinator)
- Raquel Jimenez (MSE Specialist)
- Meaningful Student Engagement Collaborative
- Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)
- All City Council (ACC) Students
- Californians for Justice (CFJ)
- Asian Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL)
- AIWA (Asian Immigrant Women Advocates)
- Youth Together
- All OUSD school staff and students for taking the survey and participating in focus groups

## **Youth In Focus**

[www.youthinfocus.net](http://www.youthinfocus.net)

510.251.9800 x302 / lailan@youthinfocus.net  
1611 Telegraph Ave. #510, Oakland, CA 94612

---

## **Da Town Researchers Website**

<http://townresearchers.webs.com>

---

## **OUSD Meaningful Student Engagement**

Raquel.Jimenez@ousd.k12.ca.us