

OUSD Board Special Full Report (Appendix)  
Equity, Social Emotional Learning and the Common Core State Standards  
July 31, 2015  
Dr. Devin Dillon, Chief Academic Officer

## **Overview**

This Board Special Full Report will provide an overview of the district focus on equity and bring coherence to the work of social emotional learning and common core so that as a district, we can begin to message how these areas of work mutually support one another and move us toward our goal of equity.

## **Pathway to Excellence**

The Pathway to Excellence, the strategic plan for Oakland Unified School District, outlines the district's foundational principles. They are: putting students first, equity, and integrity. These foundational principles serve as the pillars that anchor our work so that "Every student thrives". The work of equity, including our district's focus on Social Emotional Learning and Common Core State Standards aligned instruction, supports our district focus on these foundational principles.

It is important to note the integration of these three bodies of work and consider how they mutually support each other and lead us closer to the type of experience we are trying to create in Oakland for students and adults. Equity needs to serve as the large frame for all of the work we do, from hiring, to ensuring proper resources through budgeting, to aligning our approaches to instruction to ensure rigorous standards are taught and targets are met. Equity is the frame we return to

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when analyzing outcomes for our students and thinking about allocation of resources.

## **Equity**

The equity work in Oakland is foundational to the overall health and success of our district. The equity policy aims to confront institutional bias that results in predictably lower academic achievement for certain subgroups of students than for their white peers. Eliminating our district's institutional bias will increase student achievement, including on-time graduation, for *all* students, while narrowing the academic and opportunity gaps between the highest and lowest performing students.

OUSD acknowledges that complex societal and historical factors contribute to the inequity within our school district. Rather than perpetuating the resulting disparities, OUSD will address and overcome this inequity and institutional bias, providing all students with the support and opportunity to succeed.

A plan that focuses on everyone, without recognizing that different groups are in unique situations and need responses appropriate to their position, will fail at delivering equal concern or effective outcomes. We can understand this idea if we think of individuals who are in a wheelchair trying to reach an upper floor. An escalator will not support those individuals in the same way as it would those who

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are able-bodied. It is not the disabled group that needs fixing, but the structure. The goal is to convey everyone to the upper floor and it is universal. But the strategy to achieve this goal must be targeted toward the disabled individuals to address their circumstances, which differ from those of other groups. We call this strategy **“targeted universalism.”**

Does this mean that we should only focus on the individuals in the wheelchair? No. But neither does it mean that we treat all groups attempting to get to the upper floor the same. A targeted universalism approach is concerned about the mobility of all groups while recognizing that some groups will require targeted strategies to get there.

Should we remain concerned about groups who are still not being targeted or well-served, such as women and girls of color? The simple answer is yes. Notice that if we build an elevator, it not only benefits the wheelchair-bound group, but also everybody else. When we transform structures to work for marginalized groups, it can often benefit all groups, and it certainly doesn't harm any of them, including those with unlimited mobility. To the extent that such emphasis may seem like a special pleader, we must remember that bringing the most marginalized to an appropriate baseline is correcting the air in the entire community. Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable serves everyone. Concern that non-targeted

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groups will receive inadequate support is not an argument against properly targeted programs.

Because none of us lay outside the circle of human concern, we must prevent anyone from languishing there. An approach to effective policy should not only be based on our unique positions in society, but also our shared humanity.

### **Definitions of Equity**

While each individual in OUSD holds their own definition of equity, it is important to develop a shared, working definition of equity for the work in OUSD. It may also be useful to consider some definitions of equity as we craft our own.

“In education, the term **equity** refers to the principle of *fairness*. While it is often used interchangeably with the related principle of *equality*, equity encompasses a wide variety of educational models, programs, and strategies that may be considered fair, but not necessarily equal. It has been said that “equity is the process; equality is the outcome,” given that equity—what is fair and just—may not, in the process of educating students, reflect strict equality—what is applied, allocated, or distributed equally”.

-Hidden curriculum (2014, August 26). In S. Abbott (Ed.), *The glossary of education reform*. Retrieved from <http://edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum>.

Equity is just and fair inclusion. An equitable school district is one in which all students can participate and prosper. The goals of equity must be to create the

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conditions that allow all to reach their full potential. In short, equity creates a path from hope to change.

### **Social Emotional Learning**

Social Emotional Learning in Oakland has deepened and broadened during the past three years and has been a central focus of the vision for community schools. The center for the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) invited OUSD to join a collaborative effort between eight large school districts to support the systematic implementation of district-wide social and emotional learning. We have developed an office of Social Emotional Learning and Leadership to lead and coordinate building and sustaining SEL across the organization and provide central and direct support to schools. On October 23, 2014 OUSD's school board was the first in the country to pass an SEL Board policy (5031). Since the Board adopted the policy, OUSD's SEL standards are now informing teaching and leading, professional learning and evaluation systems for students, teachers and leaders.

The challenge of educating the whole child is important work that we are privileged to lead. We recognize that our students come to school with a variety of needs, including support for their social and emotional health and well-being. In order to achieve equity for students in Oakland, we must also focus on the social

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emotional needs of our students, teachers and leaders. OUSD's social-emotional learning standards provide us with clarity and tools to support the skills students need in order to engage and access the new rigorous, Common Core State Standards. By integrating the focus on social emotional learning with rigorous academics, we provide all students in Oakland with the skills necessary to succeed in life beyond our schools. The OUSD SEL standards also serve as a foundation for adults in the systems to have challenging conversations about equity.

### **Update on Common Core Implementation**

This year we will work with school teams to deepen their implementation of Common Core aligned instruction. We will be hosting three Common Core anchor days for professional development. Schools will have their choice of topics to focus on, with alignment to the Oakland Effective Teaching Framework (OETF). These intensive professional development days will serve as a platform for schools to deepen their understanding of the standards, through unpacking the standards and engaging in rigorous curriculum design, through use of protocols for unit design, like Understanding by Design (UbD). School teams will have time to hear from an expert in their area of focus, analyze student level data and create a plan for taking their learning back to their school site. In addition to these three days throughout the school year, we will continue to offer teachers professional development on

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aligned curriculum, practice and instructional approaches. Through professional development of our teachers, principals and support on site with Common Core teacher leaders (CCTLs) at twenty-six of our neediest schools, we will move deeper with our Common Core implementation this school year.

### **Common Core as Equity**

As we deepen our understanding about what it means to be engaged as a district in equitable outcomes for students, we are using CCSS as a frame for equity. The promise of CCSS is one of equity. Students will be prepared for college and career regardless of which state they live in. For the first time we will be able to compare student outcome data with other states because we will be using a common assessment metric (SBAC or PARCC). We see the release of the SBAC results and data reports as an opportunity to see how our students are performing in relation to their peers across the state and across the county. The SBAC results will be released in August and shared with the public sometime thereafter.

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## **References**

### **Equity**

Equity Board Policy 5032 (draft) for first reading

National Coalition for Equity in Education  
<http://ncee.education.ucsb.edu/aboutus.htm>

National Equity Project  
<http://nationalequityproject.org>

### **Social Emotional Learning**

<http://www.ousd.org/Domain/143>  
SEL Board Policy 5031  
SEL Standards

**Center for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**  
<http://www.casel.org>

### **Common Core State Standards**

**Aspen Guide**  
<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/implementation-common-core-state-standards-transition-guide-school-level-leaders>



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**The Equity Assistance Centers. (2013). *How the Common Core Must Ensure Equity by Fully Preparing Every Student for Postsecondary Success: Recommendations from the Regional Equity Assistance Centers on implementation of the Common Core State Standards.***

<http://www.wested.org/resources/how-the-common-core-must-ensure-equity-by-fully-preparing-every-student-for-postsecondary-success/>

[Understanding by Design overview](#)

[School Teams engaged in Cycles of Inquiry with Supports](#)

**Oakland Effective Teaching Framework**

<http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/Page/11430><http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/Page/11430>