



Bringing Oakland Together for Our Students

Conditions for Effective Teaching in Oakland Public Schools

Key questions, research, and data that can help inform the critical conversations being held at the 2011 Oakland Teacher Convention

This guide was compiled by GO Public Schools Information Center staff, board members, and policy fellows in collaboration with members of the GO community.

We acknowledge that:

- Funding stability and adequacy are arguably the most important conditions to support our teachers.
- Many conditions necessary to support teachers are not discussed in this guide.
- OUSD has many good policies and practices that support effective teaching that should be continued.
- The teachers who participate in the convention this week will bring a wealth of perspectives, knowledge, and understanding far beyond what our small group of educators and community have compiled.

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2. *Notes on the Current Reality in OUSD* contains up-to-date, specific information about the topic in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD).

A. Teachers are Leaders and Share Decision-Making

Questions:

1. In which school-site decisions should teachers be involved?
2. What teacher leadership roles should exist at each school site?
3. What is the role of a teacher in determining professional development at school sites?

B. Teacher Evaluation and PD are Supportive and Data-Driven

Questions:

1. What is the purpose of teacher evaluation?
2. How should teacher evaluation support teacher professional development?
3. How should teacher evaluation inform professional development decisions at the site and district levels?
4. How should data and evidence about student learning inform evaluations and professional development?

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Questions:

1. What are the roles of parents, teachers, and principals in selecting a teaching team?
2. When should candidates outside of the district be considered to fill vacancies at schools?
3. How can schools with high teacher turnover attract and retain quality teachers?
4. What should be the role of seniority in teacher placement?
5. What are the consequences of resignations, vacancies, or new openings at different points in OUSD/OEA hiring timeline?

D. Every School Has a Great Leader

Questions:

1. What is a school leader’s role in creating conditions to support teachers?
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3. How much autonomy must school leaders have to lead great schools?
4. How important are a school leader’s expectations of teachers? Students?

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Questions:

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2. How can OUSD’s salary schedule be modified to help retain teachers?
3. What conditions, inside and outside of school, support effective teaching?



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A. Teachers are Leaders and Share Decision-Making

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Why this Matters:

- **Teacher Leadership Inspires Teacher Investment:** Distributing leadership empowers teachers to play a greater role in the administration of the school, “brings decision-making authority close to the classroom, and gives teachers a new sense of responsibility and ownership in the school.”¹ According to a recent study, the primary reason teachers reported for leaving their previous school was the “lack of opportunities for growth/advancement.”²
- **Teacher Leadership Inspires Student Success:** Successful schools continually rely on the leadership and collaboration of their teachers. As noted in the *Turnaround Challenge*, “[t]o continue to add value to the work of the team, each [teacher] must continue to learn as well. Instead of suffering the stresses and challenges of high-poverty schools in isolation, teachers in [High Poverty, High Performing (“HHPH”)] schools work together incessantly and naturally. The HHPH effective practice literature abounds in professional learning communities, common planning time, collaborative professional development, common lesson study, and group reviews of student work.”³ To ensure that site decisions are effective and relevant to student learning, “[t]hose who work with students on a day-to-day basis – namely the teachers – must be involved in the substantive decisions regarding changes that affect their day-to-day lives.”⁴
- **Professional Development Should Include Leadership Development:** According to the California Teachers Association’s vision for developing strong, effective teachers, “California should fully fund professional development that spans the spectrum of a teacher’s career...continuing through a comprehensive Peer Assistance and Review program.”⁵

Notes on the Current Reality in OUSD:

- **Teacher Leadership in Oakland is Site-Dependent:** The Oakland Education Association (OEA)-OUSD contract does not detail career ladders or teacher leadership opportunities. Teacher participation in decision-making varies significantly across the district. For example, at some schools, teachers and parents are highly involved in interviewing potential new teachers for the site. At other schools, decisions about hiring are made by principals alone, or by the central office. At some schools, teachers are asked to provide significant input on budget priorities. At other schools, budgeting is done primarily by the principal in collaboration with central office staff.
- **Teacher Leadership is Not Funded:** Many school sites have little to no budget to compensate teachers for the work they do to organize and support school-wide activities and professional development. The budget crisis of the last several years has significantly limited school communities’ ability to resource teacher leadership roles and compensation for time spent on school-wide projects and decision-making.

¹ Oregon Small School Initiative, Distributive Leadership, n.d. available at <http://www.e3smallschools.org/dl.html> Accessed March 31, 2011.

² The New Teacher Project (2011), Retention of High Performers. pg. 13, available at http://schoolleaderstoolbox.org/assets/tools/TNTP_Toolkit_3_-_Retention_TSLT_0311.pdf

³ Calkins, Andrew, et al, (2007) “The Turnaround Challenge,” pg. 35.

⁴ Marzano, R. (2003). What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action, pg.174.

⁵ California Teachers Association, Teacher Quality, n.d. available at <http://www.cta.org/Issues-and-Action/Teacher-Quality/Testing-full-brief.aspx>, accessed March 30, 2011.



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B. Teacher Evaluation and PD are Supportive and Data-Driven

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Why this Matters:

- **Differentiated Support is Key to Improvement:** “Evaluation systems fail to differentiate performance among teachers. As a result, teacher effectiveness is largely ignored. Excellent teachers cannot be recognized or rewarded, chronically low-performing teachers languish, and the wide majority of teachers performing at moderate levels do not get the differentiated support...they need to improve as professionals.”⁶
- **A Comprehensive System:** American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten stated “this is the perfect time to incorporate a new approach to teacher support and evaluation.” The AFT’s “aim is to have a comprehensive, fair, transparent and expedient process to identify, improve and—if necessary—remove ineffective teachers.” AFT says, “a comprehensive development and evaluation system would enable all teachers to improve, and to align their work with what kids need to know and do.”⁷
- **Professional Development at High Performing Schools:** “Certainly any organization that is to sustain its effectiveness over time must engage in ongoing processes of continuous improvement. Even more certainly, a school that claims its fundamental purpose is to ensure high levels of learning for all students should search for more effective practices if even some of its students are not succeeding.”⁸
- **Professional Development Must be Data Driven:** For example, research involving over 1,000 mathematics and science teachers concluded that sustained and intensive professional development is most likely to enhance teacher skills, and ultimately student achievement.⁹

Notes on the Current Reality in OUSD:

- **Evaluation Procedure:** Tenured teachers in OUSD are evaluated once every other year through a formal process. The contract requires mid-year and final summary assessments of new employees and employees who received unsatisfactory, below, or approaching expectations.¹⁰
- **Lack of Meaningful Evaluation:** In OUSD, most teachers are rated *satisfactory*. Many evaluations are not happening at all. In a 2008 audit of 100 current teachers’ evaluations since 2004: 22 teachers had no evaluations on file; only four teachers received an *unsatisfactory* rating in any category on any evaluation; two teachers received at least two *unsatisfactory* ratings in a final evaluations.¹¹
- **Professional Development:** Site leaders direct professional development for teachers, including district-led workshops and site-based meetings focused on skills, content, or curriculum. All schools in OUSD were recently asked to organize ‘professional learning communities’ in which groups of teachers routinely meet to engage in job-embedded activities that include inquiry, action research, and data analysis.

6 Weisberg, Daniel, et al., The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness (The New Teacher Project, 2009) pg. 6.

7 Address at American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Teacher Evaluation Conference, February 2011.

8 Dufour, Richard, “We’re Already a ‘Good’ School – Why Do We Need to Improve?” Education Week, Jan. 6, 2010 (Vol. 29, #16, p. 12)

9 Garet, M. S., et.al. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. American Educational Research Journal, 38(4), 915-945.

10 Oakland Education Association/OUSD 2005-08 Collective Bargaining Agreement Title 13

11 Dufour, Richard, “We’re Already a ‘Good’ School – Why Do We Need to Improve?” Education Week, Jan. 6, 2010 (Vol. 29, #16, p. 12)



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C. Schools and Teachers Choose Each Other (“Mutual Consent”)

Questions:

1. What are the roles of parents, teachers, and principals in selecting a teaching team?
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Why this matters:

- **Teacher/School Match:** A California teacher explains, “Finding people who ‘fit the chemistry’ [is] really important. We’ve always selected staff members who have that ability to work collaboratively. We’re willing to take risks together, to problem-solve together, and to keep our egos out of the process of working toward a common goal.”¹² Several urban districts – including New York City, Chicago, Washington D.C., Baltimore, and the entire state of Colorado – now practice *mutual consent placements*, in which both the teacher and principal consent to a teacher’s placement.
- **Recruitment/Selection:** When creating a high performing team, an effective recruitment process can bring in strong teachers, communicate a school’s unique culture, and establish high expectations through modeling, and speaking with current staff.¹³
- **Building Strong Instructional Teams:** Giving principals the authority to accept, turn down, or look for alternative candidates is key to building strong and effective school teams.¹⁴ New Leaders for New Schools recommends that districts “provide significant hiring authority for new teachers at the school level and avoid forced transfers.” Highly effective principals find qualified candidates beyond the traditional district pool, often turning to surrounding districts and their own professional networks.¹⁵

Notes on the Current Reality in OUSD:

- **Mutual Consent Not Required:** OUSD does not currently practice mutual consent placement.
- **External Candidates:** The OEA contract stipulates that before any external teacher candidates are offered any positions, priority placements must be signed, and the voluntary transfer process conducted. OUSD cannot provide early contracts to promising external candidates, and no external hiring can occur until all consolidated teachers have been placed.¹⁶
- **Voluntary Teacher Transfers:** All current teachers are eligible for voluntary transfer, and the most senior voluntarily transferring teacher is given first preference of district openings.¹⁷
- **Consolidated Teachers:** Teachers are “consolidated” because of decreased enrollment, curriculum or program changes, or budget problems. The least senior teachers are consolidated first and have last preference of openings. All vacancies must be first offered to consolidated staff.¹⁸
- **Protection for Low Performing Schools:** California state law, recognizing the importance of teacher-site match, now allows principals at low-performing schools to refuse teacher assignments.¹⁹

¹² Futernick, Ken, (2007). Possible Dream, Retaining California’s Teachers so all Students Learn, pg.30.

¹³ The New Teacher Project (2011), Retention of High Performers, available at http://schoolleaderstoolbox.org/assets/tools/Recruitment_Toolkit_March_2011.pdf

¹⁴ Bumping HR: Giving Principals More Say Over Staffing, National Council on Teacher Quality (2010) pg. 10.

¹⁵ Principal Effectiveness: A New Principalship to Drive Student Achievement, Teacher Effectiveness, and School Turnaround, New Leaders for New Schools (2009) pg 21.

¹⁶ Oakland Education Association/OUSD 2005-08 Collective Bargaining Agreement Titles 12.2, 12.6.2, 12.6.1, 12.7.2.

¹⁷ Oakland Education Association/OUSD 2005-08 Collective Bargaining Agreement Titles 12.6.2.

¹⁸ Oakland Education Association/OUSD 2005-08 Collective Bargaining Agreement 12.8.8, 12.9.

¹⁹ California Education Code § 35036.



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Why this Matters:

- **Principal as Catalyst:** Principals drive effectiveness through their role as managers – including teacher hiring, evaluation, dismissal, retention, and professional and leadership development, as well as by providing instructional leadership.²⁰ “By ensuring that essential support systems are present, effective principals build instructional capacity, increase teacher effectiveness, and foster the creation and development of a dedicated, stable instructional team.”²¹
- **Sustained Reform:** Sustained reform at high poverty schools is possible when principals...have the ability to make decisions with agility, especially in times of crisis – specific to time, people, money, and program.²² “Leadership is a necessary condition for effective reform relative to the school-level, the teacher-level, and the student-level factors” associated with student achievement.²³
- **Mission-driven Leadership:** A 2009 evaluation of Oakland's small schools found that having “[m]ission-driven principals who are proactively recruited and/or mentored to serve at their schools” was a key characteristic of effectively functioning and productive schools.²⁴

Notes on the Current Reality in OUSD:

- **Lack of Evaluation:** Principals are evaluated using the collective-bargaining evaluation system. However, OUSD reported that in 2009-10, 59% of principals were not evaluated at all.²⁵
- **Results-Based Budgeting (RBB):** In OUSD, the principal has a great deal of influence over a site's budget due to RBB. “In 2008 RBB, 84% of the district's general purpose funds went directly to school sites and gave each school community the flexibility to decide how it spent its dollars.”²⁶ In December 2009, 86% of OUSD principals affirmed their support for RBB and site-based decision-making.
- **Need for Increased District Support:** Due to funding cuts, OUSD no longer provides all new principals with an Operations Support Coach at each site. Instead, Regional Network Executive Officers and Network Executive Officers support principals, and professional development takes place at bi-monthly network leadership meetings.²⁷ Additional support is also given through organizations such as UC Berkeley's Principal Leadership Institute, New Leaders for New Schools, National Equity Project, and Oakland Schools Foundation.

20 Principal Effectiveness: A New Principalship to Drive Student Achievement, Teacher Effectiveness, and School Turnaround, New Leaders for New Schools (2009) pg 6.

21 Futernick, Ken, (2007). Possible Dream, Retaining California's Teachers so all Students Learn, pg.63.

22 Calkins, Andrew, et. al. (2007). “The Turnaround Challenge.” Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, available at http://www.massinsight.org/publications/turnaround/51/file/1/pubs/2010/04/15/TheTurnaroundChallenge_MainReport.pdf. Accessed 30 March 2011.

23 Marzano, Robert, (2003) What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action, pg.172

24 Vasudeva, Ash, et. al. (2009). “Oakland Unified School District New Small Schools Initiative Evaluation,” Stanford University School Redesign Network, pg. 38, available at http://srmls.org/resources/publications/ousd/docs/ousd_final_report.pdf. Accessed 30 March 2011.

25 Superintendent's Report. Oakland Unified School District. October 13, 2010.

26 Oakland Unified School District: Knowledge Capture Project: Results Based Budgeting, pg. 1, available at publicportal.ousd.k12.ca.us/.../lib/.../ousd_RBB_caselet_rev1.pdf.

27 Superintendent's Report. Oakland Unified School District. October 13, 2010.



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E. A System that Works for Teachers

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1. How can OUSD's central office services support effective teaching?
2. How can OUSD's salary schedule be modified to help retain teachers?
3. What conditions, inside and outside of school, support effective teaching?

Why this Matters:

- **Pay Raises:** Retention pay and significant one-time pay boosts after the early years of teaching have been shown to effectively retain higher performers.²⁸ Salary schedules like OUSD's provide no financial incentive for those teachers who are more effective.²⁹
- **Time to Support Collaboration:** In a survey of over 3,000 California teachers, 88% indicated that providing teachers time for in-school collaboration was *absolutely essential* or *very important* to retention.³⁰ Further research supports that "teachers need time to collaborate with their peers, discuss and observe best practices, and participate in professional development that prepares them for changing curricula and the challenges of teaching a diverse population."³¹
- **Less Bureaucracy:** "Survey findings show that many teachers are negatively affected by bureaucratic constraints and poor support from the district office."³² Data shows that effective district systems increase the likelihood that teachers remain committed to their school communities.³³
- **Quality Facilities and Resources:** "School facilities can have a significant impact on teaching and learning. The condition, location and design of school buildings affect the health, safety and morale of all who work and learn within them, in addition to facilitating the kind of educational experiences...necessary for students to succeed in the 21st century."³⁴
- **Professional Culture:** "Understanding and responding to teacher needs improves workplace satisfaction, prevents adversarial dynamics, and allows teachers to focus...on improving student outcomes."³⁵

Notes on the Current Reality

- **Oakland's Teaching Force:** In 2008-9, approximately 25% of Oakland's 2,000 teachers were in their 1st or 2nd year, 40% had five or less years of experience, and 25% had 20 or more years of experience.
- **Current Salary Schedule:** The OUSD-OEA contract ties salary to years of service and graduate credits. Our inflexible salary schedule prevents OUSD from responding to changes in the teacher market.
- **Teacher Opinion:** A 2010 OUSD survey found that: 70% of teachers *agree* or *strongly agree* that "this school feels like a caring and supportive environment;" 30% of teachers *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that "communications about district strategies for improving student achievement are clear;" 51% of teachers *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that "OUSD makes student learning a priority;" and 13% *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that "members of the Board of Education 'value my ideas about improving student achievement.'"³⁶

28 The New Teacher Project (2011), Retention of High Performers, available at http://schoolleaderstoolbox.org/assets/tools/TNTP_Toolkit_3_-_Retention_TSLT_0311.pdf, see also http://www.massinsight.org/publications/stg-resources/89/file/1/pubs/2010/04/20/PayforPerformanceinTurnarounds_July_2009.pdf

29 Wenders, J. (2003). The Latest Bogeyman: Teacher Retention. Texas Education Review, Winter 2003-04 Double Issue.

30 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010), Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools, pg. 93.

31 Hirsch, Eric, et. al, (2006) North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Interim Report, pg. 11.

32 Futernick, Ken, (2007) Possible Dream, Retaining California's Teachers so all Students Learn, p.65

33 Id. at p.63

34 Hirsch, Eric, et. al, (2006) North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Interim Report, pg. 14.

35 The New Teacher Project (2011), Retention of High Performers, available at <http://schoolleaderstoolbox.org/toolkit/explore/building-a-professional-culture>

36 2010 OUSD *Use Your Voice* survey, teacher results based on approximately 1,200 teacher responses.



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About Great Oakland Public Schools Information Center

Great Oakland Public Schools Information Center supports a coalition of Oakland families, students, teachers, principals, community, and civic leaders united around a positive, student-oriented vision for public education in our city. We provide leadership, education, and information to ensure that all Oakland students have access to excellent public schools in their neighborhood and throughout the city.