

October 8, 2010

Dear Board Members and Superintendent Smith,

We write in support of your concerted work to develop the strategic plan, *Community Schools, Thriving Students* so that Oakland can provide a great public education to every Oakland student.

We appreciate that the OUSD team is working hard to advance the planning process while managing the opening of the school year and day-to-day needs of our students and schools.

It is clear to us that OUSD leaders are well-intended about and taking action to reach out to and include community in this planning process.

That being said, the GO network and public education community have concerns about how community participation is being planned and implemented for *Thriving Students*.

Superintendent Smith has challenged our community to reach across the traditional boundaries and structures in our work to manifest the *Thriving Students* vision.

We appreciate Directors London and Hinton-Hodge's comments at the September 13 Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting about public participation on the task forces. The item was "discussed and closed" on September 13th but we know the task force work is only beginning.

Based on our review of the composition of the Task Forces to date (attached), it seems like each task force leader is developing his/her own standard for task force composition.

Question: What direction have task force leaders been given about task force composition and membership? Are their expectations of all Task Forces for involvement from Oakland's parents, students, advocates, civic leaders and education experts? How can community external to OUSD apply or be nominated to serve?

It is critical that parents and teachers be represented on every task force. Members of the GO network and public education community are prepared to commit the time and energy to this process. GO would also work to community allies to take a lead on helping to select and/or support parents to participate on the task forces

We also believe that the bold vision set forth in *Thriving Students* – that OUSD become the platform for innovation in Oakland public education – demands that parents, teacher, and principals from our charter public schools be included in these task force bodies and discussions.

We ask that the membership development of these task forces and of all other subsequent task forces be transparent and inclusive.

We strongly believe that those closest to a problem should help develop the solution, especially in light of recent tumultuous years in OUSD and knowing the significant decisions before us as a community during this financial crisis.

These task forces are a critical opportunity to build lasting public education leadership among all Oaklanders – not just professionals who already work in our schools.

We know that approximately half our teachers do not live in Oakland and many will retire in the next several years. The Task Force process is an opportunity to build and broaden leadership among our teaching and parent community.

The Task Force PowerPoint presentations also speak to critical “interdependencies with other task forces.” We appreciate that this is a critical function in a system as complex as Oakland public schools.

Question: What structures are in place to coordinate the work and interdependencies among the Task Forces? Who is playing that role on the OUSD team?

In June, *Thriving Students* (page 8) stated an intention to develop a “Strategic Planning Feedback Portal” on the OUSD Website

We will create a centralized place for all community members to provide direct comments and feedback to the Superintendent and related staff. We will... develop nimble and user-friendly web pages where audience members can read and review a variety of planning pieces (e.g., complete drafts, specific chapters, models, frameworks) and then provide real-time feedback to the appropriate drivers (e.g., through emails, IM, etc...). *The goal is to give users a simple and interactive experience with the planning as it happens.*

This sounded like a great way to give Oakland education stakeholders access to the process.

Question: What is the status of the portal? When can we expect it to launch? How do you envision partnering with GO and other community organizations and networks to support engagement with this content and resource?

GO Public Schools would like to host an opportunity for community members to meet with OUSD task force leaders about task force goals and membership ASAP.

We have tentatively reserved the Jack London Aquatic Center for the evenings of October 21, 25, and 28 if any of these will work for OUSD representatives.

GO Public Schools and the Oakland public education community have come together strongly in support of Measure L: The Student Achievement, Support and Safety Measure.

Our support and efforts are a loud vote of confidence for the current Board and Superintendent. We are investing in OUSD. We – families, students, advocates, and leaders – want and expect to participate in the design of OUSD’s future.

Sincerely,
Ratna Amin and Jonathan Klein on behalf of the GO Public Schools community

Great Oakland Public Schools Information Center
Summary of OUSD Strategic Planning Task Force Composition

The membership and planned community participation for the six task forces that have shared their initial plans at board committee meetings are as follows:

1. Ensuring & Empowering Effective Teachers

Teachers and two teaching experts comprise this task force. No students or parents are included in the initial work of defining effective teaching. There is no specific mention of outreach to Oakland's charter school community. Community involvement is planned by invitation to "focus groups" starting in January.

2. Core Curriculum for College and Career Readiness

Membership includes OUSD central office and school site staff. Two higher education representatives and teachers are included but not as "core members." No community or parent participation is mentioned, nor is participation from the business/employment/economic development sector who employ our students when they graduate.

3. Effective Principals & Leadership

Core membership includes principals, union leaders, and professional colleagues, and currently does not include any parents/guardians or teachers. Community engagement begins four months into the process and format of participation is not yet defined.

4. Full-Service Community Schools

The PowerPoint posted for the October 4 Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting mentions a "Core Team" that will meet every Thursday afternoon – composition and membership of core team are not specified.

5. Regional Governance Team

The PowerPoint posted for the October 4 Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting sets a goal of establishing a "regional governance team structure" by October 15. Thriving Students (page 19) states that these teams will be "composed of no more than 18 directors representing community stakeholders and service providers." The PPT mentions a "Core Team" that will meet every Thursday afternoon – composition and membership of core team are not specified.

6. Secondary Experience and Achievement Task Force

The PowerPoint posted for the October 4 mentions a "Core Planning Team" that will meet bi-weekly beginning Thursday, October 14 and an "Entire Task Force" which will meet bi-monthly beginning November 2010 - composition and membership of both groups are not specified. The PowerPoint states that the Task Force will facilitate community engagement starting in spring 2011.