

Spring Workshops

Board Community Engagement Report

October 12, 2009

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Prepared for

East Bay Community Foundation

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I. Project Overview

Background

In March of 2008, the Oakland Board of Education adopted “Community Conversations” as its formal 2008-2009 community engagement plan (see Appendix 1). During the 2008 – 2009 school year, each Board of Education member planned to conduct at least two school community workshops at each of their district’s high schools and red tiered (lowest performing) schools to inform Board policy. To complement the larger community workshops, many board members elected to meet separately with other stakeholder groups including, parent leaders, teachers and students. The first workshops took place in the Fall Semester (October and November) and follow-up workshops were conducted in the Spring semester (April and May 2009) Workshop.

Goals and Objectives

This was a pilot program for Board members to engage parents, staff and community members in school community workshops on how to improve achievement and attain district goals. Board members hoped to develop a better understanding of school needs in order to inform Board policies related to academic achievement and community engagement.

The objectives of the workshops were to:

1. Identify school-level strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that are shared by schools across the city or within a region of the city that affect a school’s capacity to improve student academic achievement.
2. Develop Board-level policies that effectively increase the capacity of schools to improve student academic achievement.
3. Establish supportive and accountable working relationships between the Board of Education, Superintendent and school leaders.

At their December retreat, the Board considered recommendations from the workshops in order to develop the district’s Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning & Achievement.

Project Leadership Team

With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) supported this process by chairing the Project Leadership Team, providing financial support directly to schools and by hiring two consultants

1. Urban Strategies Council to assist the district and EBCF to plan, implement, document and assess the board engagement process (see **Appendix A: Staff Bios**).
2. Hatchuel Tabernik & Associates (HTA) to evaluate the board engagement process and

EBCF created a Project Leadership Team made up of representatives from OUSD, EBCF, HTA and Urban Strategies Council, to make decisions regarding resource allocation, program planning, implementation and assessment..

II. Summary of Fall Workshops Design, Implementation and Report

In the Fall of 2008, Board Members held 27 workshops which were attended by 540 members of the community. Below is a summary of the agenda and outcomes of the Fall workshops.

Fall Workshop Agenda

The standard agenda for the Fall workshops was designed to solicit input from parents and families and to learn what works and what does not at the selected schools.

- I Preliminaries**
- II School Data Presentation: How is this school performing?**
 - 1. Overall Performance
 - 2. Student Achievement tied to goals
 - a. College and Career Readiness (HS only)
 - b. Citizenship/Student Discipline
 - c. School Climate
 - 3. Tiered Color and Program Improvement Status
- III Inquiry Activity**
 - 1. What are we doing to increase the number of students who:
 - a. stay in school and graduate (High Schools):?
 - b. are proficient in Algebra (Middle Schools)?
 - c. are proficient in Reading (Elementary Schools)?
 - 2. What's working?
 - 3. What needs to be done?
 - 4. What should the Board of Education do to help the school?
- IV Next Steps**
- V Closing & Incentives**

Fall Recommendations from Parents and Families

The Fall workshops generated 98 distinct recommendations from members of the 27 participating school communities. The most common recommendations are summarized in the table below.

Common Recommendations from Fall Workshops

Academic Achievement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide a way for parents to monitor student assignments.2. Retain qualified and excellent teachers at every school.3. More resources for afterschool programs.4. More parent training programs (English, Math, etc.).5. More translation support to improve parent teacher interactions.
Attendance	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Institute a system to inform parents about attendance.2. Increase electives so students are motivated to attend.
Discipline	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide incentives for good behavior.2. Follow a consistent discipline policy.
School Climate	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Recognize students' good behavior with positive incentives.2. Organize a youth court to address social issues.3. Provide tools for students to voice their opinions in a safe environment.4. Parents should visit schools and support teachers from home.

Report on Fall Workshops

For more information about Fall program performance, outcomes and recommendations, please see the report on the Fall workshops available online here:

http://www.urbanstrategies.org/documents/FinalBoardReport_USC_2179FINAL.pdf

III. Program Description

Overview of Spring Workshop Design

The Spring 2009 community conversations were opportunities for Board Members to report back to their constituents on the decisions they made based on what they heard at the Fall workshops. Community conversations during the second round were largely held at meetings of existing school governance groups, and no additional outreach was done. The standard agenda for the Spring workshops was designed to:

1. Share school successes & progress
2. Report back to the community on board activities and plans
3. Solicit feedback on board activities and policies.

Spring Workshop Agenda

I. Welcome & Student Recognition

II. Board Report

1. Board member presents what they heard from the district as a whole, from their board district and from the school.

2. Board member presents to the large group (see attached Powerpoint presentation in **Appendix B: Board Powerpoint Presentation**).
 - a. Policy/ Strategic Direction
 - b. Budget
 - c. Superintendent Search
 3. Board member explains how feedback from school, board district, and school helped shape policy.
- III. **School Progress**
1. Principal/teachers present school strategies that work.
- IV. **Closing**

Number of Spring Workshops and Participants

Number of Workshops

While the Board Members had planned to re-visit each of the 27 schools they had met with in the Fall, only 12 community workshops were held during the Spring. Board Members attended 10 of 12 workshops.

Number of Participants

The total number of participants at all the workshops, based on sign in sheets, was 246 including 198 parents. The total number of participants at all the workshops, based on the diarists' observational estimates was substantially higher at 483, including 245 parents. This difference is attributable to the fact that some participants did not sign in (see **Appendix C: School & Workshop Data**).

Number of Workshops and Participants by School Type

3 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 5 high schools held Spring community workshops (see **Appendix C: School & Workshop Data**).

School Type	Number of Workshops	Number of Planned Workshops	Participant Sign-in Total	Sign-in Parents Only	Total Participants from Diarist Observations	Parent Total from Diarist Observations
Elementary	3	6	84	77	170	94
Middle	4	6	78	63	123	63
High	5	15	84	58	190	88
Total	12	27	246	198	483	245

Number of Workshops & Participants by Board District

Board District	Number of Workshops	Number of Planned Workshops	Participant Sign-in Total	Sign-in Parents Only	Total Participants from Diarist Observations	Parent Total from Diarist Observations
1	2	2	59	51	83	62
2	2	4	56	43	120	66
3	0	5	0	0	0	0
4	4	4	53	47	167	73
5	2	3	50	37	66	24
6	1	3	8	4	13	5
7	1	6	20	16	34	15
Total	12	27	246	198	483	245

Workshop Planning Process & Timeline

Initial Meeting with Principal and Board Member

In March, the district Family and Community Office (FCO) staff and/or Urban Strategies Council staff met with the Principal and Board Member to introduce the goals and process of the project. The Principal and Board Member reached agreements on activities and timeline. If it had not been determined who the Community Partner would be, Urban Strategies Council staff followed up with principal after the meeting.

Finding Partners

Principals were encouraged to bring other stakeholders into planning the board engagement process as possible, including:

1. Teachers and school staff;
2. Parent leaders;
3. Local non-profits; or
4. Student leaders

School-level Planning Meeting

After the initial meeting with the Board member, the Principal and their partners at the school site planned the meeting. They planned:

- Additional stakeholder meetings with the Board Member.
- Outreach & publicity for the community workshop.
- Workshop Logistics: translation, childcare, catering, incentives etc.
- Budget to support workshop logistics.

- How to present school progress and successes.
- Roles and responsibilities.

Outreach

Outreach was the responsibility of each school. Principals were encouraged to work with community partners to augment outreach efforts by reaching out to their own constituents. The Family and Community Office was available to offer advice and technical assistance on outreach.

Logistical & Budget Preparation

Community partners were asked to submit a budget to the East Bay Community Foundation which covered catering, childcare, incentives, and translation if necessary. Principals and community partners were asked to carefully consider whether they wanted to use some of the funds for the workshop to pay for incentives or other methods (DJ, sound system) to make the workshop more attractive to parents.

Community Workshop

These workshops included dinner, a set agenda, and prizes for participants. At the community workshop, FCO staff were be on hand to assist with logistics, deliver district-wide handouts, incentives, and raffle tickets, as well as to assure that the district-wide recording and evaluation tools were used. Additionally, each workshop was be attended by a diarist who will took detailed notes on the workshop for the board member and site team.

Spring Timeline

Preparation: March

- Laura Moran and Sara Nuño met with Board Members to plan for Spring Engagements
- Raquel Jimenez and Sara Nuño invited board members to shadow students
- Sara Nuño encouraged, supported, and coordinated board member meetings with other stakeholders
- Sara Nuño began to contact principals and set dates after initial meeting with Board Members
- Sara Nuño asked FCO Family Parent Liaisons to help coordinate this at their site
- Liz Vance also met with principals to plan as needed

Coordination & Implementation: March through mid April

- Sara Nuño continued to coordinate dates and times with principals and board members
- Liz Vance and Sara Nuño contacted community partners
- Sara Nuño coordinated staff members from FCO to be at each engagement
- Engagements began

Implementation: April through May

- Engagements continue

Titles & Affiliations

1. Laura Moran, Chief Services Officer, Oakland Unified School District
2. Sara Nuño, Board Engagement Specialist, Oakland Unified School District
3. Raquel Jimenez, Student Engagement Specialist, Oakland Unified School District
4. Liz Vance, Program Coordinator, Urban Strategies Council

Roles & Responsibilities

Principal

Principals co-led the Board engagement process with Board Members. At the community workshops, principals shared school success stories. Principals were ultimately responsible for workshop logistics; however, support was available from the Family Community Office as well as partners at the school site.

Board Members

Board members co-led the Board engagement process with principals. The Board presentation made up the bulk of the community workshop.

Network Executive Officers (NExO)

Network Executive Officers participated in the community workshops and served as resources to principals as they planned their workshop presentations.

Family & Community Office

FCO staff provided the following supports:

- Access to district interpretation & translation services
- Translation of all common handouts
- Connection to youth leaders
- Technical assistance to develop an outreach strategy

Education Cabinet

Cabinet members participated at workshops as schedules allowed.

East Bay Community Foundation

East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) provided support to this project at the district level and at the school level via grants to community organizations which partnered with schools to carry out the community workshops. EBCF also provided consultant contracts to assist with planning, tool development, and evaluation. The East Bay Community Foundation chairs the Project Leadership Team.

Urban Strategies Council

Urban Strategies Council staff members were available to provide the following supports:

- Connection to a community organization to partner with on the project
- Agenda and process planning
- Taking detailed notes at each workshop for use by school communities and board members

Hatchuel Tabernik & Associates

Hatchuel Tabernik & Associates (HTA) evaluated the board engagement process. They produced and analyzed participant feedback and engagement surveys and sign-in cards. Their evaluation of this process will help the Board plan their engagement strategy next year.

Partners at the School Site

Principals were encouraged to bring other stakeholders in planning the board engagement process including:

1. Teachers and school staff
2. Parent leaders
3. Local non-profits
4. Student leaders

Teachers

Principals were encouraged to invite teachers to attend the community workshop and Board Members had the opportunity hold separate meetings with teachers as part of the board engagement process at some school sites.

Parent Leaders

Parents were invited to attend the community workshop and Board Members had the opportunity to hold separate meetings with parent leaders as part of the board engagement process at some school sites.

Student Leaders

The Student Leaders committed to building a long-term meaningful youth-adult partnership with their specific school. Student Leaders were available to:

- Peer-to-peer outreach
- Promote the importance of student engagement with the school
- Facilitate the student discussion with Board member (if the Board member has committed to meeting separately with students) to de-brief the Shadow Day
- Facilitate and host the Student for a Day
- Help at the sign in table during the school-community workshop, as well as distribute and collect evaluation and feedback surveys, if needed
- Help facilitate small group activity at the community workshop

Community Partners

Principals were encouraged to partner with a local non-profit organization of their choosing to assist with the community workshop. This “Community Partner” was asked to assist in the following ways:

- Assist with outreach
- Be an active participant in planning and hosting the board community workshop
- Help to develop a budget for the workshop
- Hold the funds for the workshops and manage the disbursement of payments (e.g., childcare, interpretation and dinner). This support will be granted to community organizations that partner with schools to support this initiative. Those schools without a community partner did not receive additional funding to support these workshops

Program Supports

The Project Leadership Team ensured that the following supports were offered to each school that participated in the process.

1. **Planning:** Before each workshop, the district Family and Community Office (FCO) staff and/or Urban Strategies Council staff met with the Principal and Board Member to introduce the goals and process of the project
2. **Pairing with Community Partners:** Each school principal involved in the engagement project had the opportunity to choose a local non-profit to serve as a “Community Partner” to support them in the board engagement process
3. **Financial** The East Bay Community Foundation provided direct financial support for each of the community workshops and support for Urban Strategies staff and diarists.
4. **Logistics:** FCO staff members were on hand to assist with logistics at each workshop
5. **Tools & Materials:** Urban Strategies developed a set of tools to assist the district in conducting community workshops at the school sites, to record and distill data and information from the workshops needed to inform policy, to collect data for evaluation purposes, and to share news about the workshops with the community
6. **Diarists:** Urban Strategies supervised a team of diarists in order to capture, compile and share information about the school workshops

Tools Developed

Urban Strategies developed a set of tools to assist the district in conducting community workshops at the school sites, record and distill data and information from the workshops to inform policy, collect data for evaluation purposes, and share news about the workshops with the community (see **Appendix D: Tools Developed for Board Community Engagement**). The tools developed include:

- 1 **Site Leaders’ Guide to State of the School Community Conversations.** This guide provided instructions and sample materials for school leaders to plan and conduct a Board engagement workshop at their school sites (see **Appendix D1: Site Leaders Guide to State of the School Community Conversations**)
- 2 **Workshop Recording Tools** Urban Strategies developed templates and procedures for the diarists’ use:
 - a **Diarists’ Procedures** (see **Appendix D2: Diarists’ Procedures**)
 - b **Diarists’ Notes Template** (see **Appendix D3: Diarists’ Notes Template**)
- 3 **Workshop Report Templates**
 - a **Newsletters** – Urban Strategies produced, upon request, newsletters designed to share school performance data, parent recommendations, school strategies and Board Member remarks with the larger school community (see **Appendix D4: Newsletters**)
 - b **School Workshop Reports** (see **Appendix D5: School Meeting Report**)
 1. **Summary Report** – Produced, upon request, reports shared with principals and Board Members to assist in school site planning processes. Urban Strategies used these reports to develop its preliminary report to the Board
 2. **Detailed Report** – These reports included observational data about how the workshops were conducted and were shared with the evaluation team for compilation
 - c **Area Focus Schools Workshop Report** – Produced in the same manner as the reports listed above, these reports included content specific to the Area Focus Schools Process (see **Appendix D6: Area Focus School Meeting Report**)
- 4 **Substitute Newsletter**– Produced for each school not visited by Board Members in the Spring (see **Appendix D7: Substitute Newsletter**). These newsletters were designed to share:
 - a Messages from the Superintendent and Board Member

- b What the Board Member heard from each school and from parents across the district
- c The Board of Education's Strategic Priority and what the Board and District will do to achieve it
- d The District's 3rd, 9th and 12th grade academic goals
- e The new A-G graduation requirements
- f The upcoming budget cuts

IV. Topics Discussed at Spring Workshops

Common Agenda Items

I. Successful School Strategies

Principal/NExO Strategy Presentations

Principals and/or NExO's presented what they viewed as successful strategies at one-third of the workshops. These presentations were most frequently made after the Board Member's presentation. Urban Strategies compiled the specific intervention strategies into four categories (see **Appendix E: Successful School Strategies** for a full list of the successful school strategies presented at the community workshops).

1. **Academic Achievement Strategies**—Strategies to improve academic achievement. Most of the strategies presented were academic achievement strategies (20 times). Urban Strategies further compiled the specific academic achievement strategies into six -subcategories:
 - a. **Instructional** – Strategies to refine methodologies and/or curriculum (Presented 7 times)
 - b. **Specialized Support** – Academic support programs that focus on a particular population or academic transition (4)
 - c. **Creating Cooperative & Integrated Learning Environments** – Strategies to encourage students to work together (3)
 - d. **English Language Arts Focus** – Strategies to focus instruction and class time on improving achievement in English Language Arts (2)
 - e. **Use of Data** – Strategies that make use of data to track student achievement (2)
 - f. **Study Skills** – Strategies to teach and facilitate effective study habits (2)
2. **School Climate Strategies** – Strategies to improve the physical and social atmosphere at the school (7).
3. **Parent Engagement Strategies** – Strategies to increase parental involvement in school activities and their children's education (3).
4. **Attendance Strategies** – Strategies to increase student attendance (1).

Community Input on School Strategies

Workshop participants commented on school strategies at half of the workshops. Of 28 total comments on school strategies at the workshops there were:

- 10 Opinions on Current Strategies (5 negative opinions about current school strategies, 5 positive opinions)
- 8 Questions
- 7 Preferences for Changed Policies and Strategies
- 3 Reports on School Strategies (reports are factual statements about conditions or activities)

Urban Strategies compiled the comments into eleven categories. (see **Appendix F: Comments on School Strategies** for a full list of the comments on school strategies presented at the community workshops).

1. **Instructional Strategies** (1 positive opinion)
2. **Programs for Advanced Students** (2 negative opinions, 2 preferences, and 1 report)
3. **Attendance** (1 negative opinion)
4. **School Climate** (1 preference, 1 report, 1 question)
5. **Guidance Counseling** (1 positive opinion)
6. **Funding for Extra-Curricular Courses** (3 preferences and 4 questions)
7. **Nature of the Student Body** (1 negative opinion)
8. **Personnel Policies** (1 preference and 2 questions)
9. **Public Schools vs. Private Schools** (2 positive opinions)
10. **Standardized Curriculum** (1 negative opinion)
11. **Swun Math** (Swun Math is a teaching methodology supported by professional development, pacing guides, assessments and instructional strategies)(1 positive opinion, 1 question, and one report)

Please note that because there were only a few discussions on each topic, , the comments on any given topic came from only one or two discussions, the number of comments indicates the length of the discussions, not the prevalence of the topic.

II. Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning and Achievement

Board Member/Family Community Office Staff Presentations

Board Members and/or staff from the Family Community Office presented the Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning and Achievement at just over half (7) of the community workshops. At all 7 of those workshops, the Board Members and/or staff from the Family Community Office highlighted that the Board would hire and retain a Superintendent who is a proven leader in strengthening and improving classroom instruction. Other Board and district activities to achieve the strategic priority were presented less frequently.

Board Statement:

1. Hire and retain a Superintendent who is a proven leader in strengthening and improving classroom instruction (7)

2. Establish strategic partnerships that help strengthen and improve classroom instruction (3)
3. Increase revenues, protect assets, and optimize the use of all available resources toward strengthening and improving classroom instruction (3)

District Staff Statement

1. Have a principal at every school who is an instructional and organizational leader (5)
2. Increase retention of effective teachers at every school (4)
3. Support every teacher (4)
4. Enable teachers to personalize student learning (4)
5. Provide schools guided budget authority and opportunities for curricular flexibility (4)
6. Provide safe and supportive conditions for students (4)
7. Provide school facilities and infrastructure that enable the delivery of high-quality instruction (4)
8. Continuously monitor performance quality and impact (4)

Community Input on the Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning and Achievement

Workshop participants did not comment on the Board's Strategic Priority, or on the Board or District's activities to achieve it. Participant input was not solicited on the Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning and Achievement, nor did participants volunteer any input.

III. Community Input from the Fall

Board Member / Family Community Office Staff Presentations

Board Members and/or staff from the Family Community Office presented the most common recommendations from the Fall workshops at 5 of the community workshops. At all 5 of those workshops, the Board Members and/or staff from the Family Community Office highlighted one of the most common recommendations from the Fall: retain qualified and excellent teachers at every school. Other common recommendations were presented less frequently.

Presentation of Common Recommendations from the Fall Workshops (Presentation Frequency)

Academic Achievement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide a way for parents to monitor student assignments (2).2. Retain qualified and excellent teachers at every school (5).3. More resources for afterschool programs (2).4. More parent training programs (English, Math, etc.) (2).5. More translation support to improve parent teacher interactions (2).
Attendance	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Institute a system to inform parents about attendance (2).2. Increase electives so students are motivated to attend (2).
Discipline	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide incentives for good behavior (2).2. Follow a consistent discipline policy (3).
School Climate	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Recognize students' good behavior with positive incentives (2).2. Organize a youth court to address social issues (2).3. Provide tools for students to voice their opinions in a safe environment (2).4. Parents should visit schools and support teachers from home (2).

Community Input on the Fall Recommendations

At one school (Oakland Tech) participants had comments about the status of the common recommendations. At all other workshops, participants did not comment on the common recommendations from the Fall. Participant input was not solicited on the Fall Recommendations, nor did participants volunteer any input.

IV. Superintendent Search

Board Member/Family Community Office Staff Presentations

Board Members and/or staff from the Family Community Office presented about the Superintendent Search at 10 of the community workshops. At 8 of those workshops, Board Members and/or staff from the Family Community Office highlighted the community workshop scheduled for May where community members would have the opportunity to speak to and ask questions of top candidates. Urban Strategies compiled the remarks into 4 categories (see **Appendix G: Board Member & Family Community Office Staff Remarks on the Superintendent Search** for a full list of the Board Member and staff remarks on the Superintendent Search).

1. Opportunities for Community Input (10)
2. Recruitment Process (9)
3. Candidate Descriptions (3)

4. Criteria for Decision-Making (1)

Community Input on the Superintendent Search

Workshop participants commented on the Superintendent search at 4 of the workshops. Of the 7 total comments on the Superintendent search there were:

- 3 comments on the **process** (2 questions and 1 negative opinion)
- 2 comments about the **candidates** (1 question and 1 preference)
- 1 comment about **opportunities for community input** (a question)
- 1 comment about **local control** (a question)

Please note that because there were only a few discussions on each topic, , the comments on any given topic came from only one or two discussions, the number of comments indicates the length of the discussions, not the prevalence of the topic (see **Appendix H: Comments on the Superintendent Search** for a full list of community comments).

V. District Budget

Board Member/Family Community Office Staff Presentations

Board Members, Principals, and/or staff from the Family Community Office presented about the District budget at 10 of the community workshops. At 6 of those workshops, the cuts to the current year's and next year's budgets were highlighted. Urban Strategies compiled the remarks into 11 categories (see **Appendix I: Board Member, NExO, Principal & Family Community Office Staff Remarks on the District Budget** for a full list of the Board Member and staff remarks).

1. **Cuts to the district budget** this year and next (6 informational statements)
2. **Potential sources of revenue**, including parcel taxes, federal funds, and stimulus funds (7 informational statements and 4 policy preferences)
3. **Decisions about the budget cuts** (4 policy preferences and decisions)
4. **Small Schools** (2 policy preferences)
5. **Class size** (2 informational statements)
6. **Contracting** (1 policy question)
7. **Carryover funds** (1 informational statement)
8. **Opportunities to Engage** (1 informational statement)

In addition, two school principals discussed what the effects of the budget cuts would look like at their schools.

Community Input on the District Budget

Workshop participants commented on the Superintendent search at 5 of the workshops. Of the 13 total comments on the budget cuts there were:

1. 5 comments about **potential sources of revenue**, including parcel taxes, federal funds, and stimulus (1 informational statement and 4 questions)
2. 3 comments about **contracting**, including union and consultant contracts (3 questions)
3. 2 comments about **consolidating schools** (2 questions)
4. 1 comment about the **effect of the cuts on an individual school** (a question)
5. 1 comment about **opportunities to engage** (a question)
6. 1 comment about the **state legislative context** (an opinion)

Please note that because there were only a few discussions on each topic, the comments on any given topic came from only one or two discussions, the number of comments indicates the length of the discussions, not the prevalence of the topic (see **Appendix J: Comments on the District Budget** for a full list of community comments).

V. Spring Board Engagement Program Performance

Efficacy in Sharing School Successes & Progress

Strengths

1. The majority (26 out of 31) of successful school strategies presented at these workshops were explained in ways to help participants visualize what the strategies look like in the classroom, at home, or on school campuses.
2. The individual student testimonies were clear, touching examples of a school's impact on the lives of young people.

Improvables

1. School success and progress was presented at only 4 of 12 workshops.
2. Despite Board consensus to highlight individual student success at the Spring workshops, at only one workshop, were individual students recognized for their successes.

Efficacy in Reporting Back to the Community on Board Activities and Plans

Presentations on Board activities and plans were uneven, the following table summarizes the frequency with which each activity or plan was presented.

Board Activity or Plan	Number of Meetings at Which the Topic was Discussed
Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning and Achievement	7
Community Input from the Fall	5
Superintendent Search	10
District Budget	10

Strengths

1. The Superintendent Search and the District Budget were presented at the majority of the workshops.
2. In several cases, Principals helped to illustrate what the effects of budget cuts would be on their schools.

Improvables

1. Reporting on Board activities and plans was uneven. While at some workshops, Board Members presented in detail on each topic, and were sure to highlight opportunities for participants to give input or to learn more, at other workshops, these mutually agreed upon topics were mentioned in passing.

Efficacy in Soliciting Feedback on Board Activities and Policies

Table: Patterns in Participant Comments by Agenda Item

Agenda Item	Opinions on Current Policies or Strategies	Questions	Preferences for Changed Policies & Strategies	Informational Statements	Total
Successful School Strategies	10	8	7	3	28
Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning and Achievement	0	0	0	0	0
Community Input from the Fall	1	2	0	0	3
Superintendent Search	1	5	1	0	7

District Budget	0	12	0	1	13
Total	12	27	8	4	51

Strengths

1. The workshops generated 51 comments on Board activities and plans as well as school strategies. These comments are summarized in the table above as well as in Section IV of this report: “Topics Discussed at Workshops.”
2. 20 of the 51 comments expressed constituents’ preferences or opinions.

Improvables

1. Participant comments were rarely solicited during the presentations, more often, participants were permitted to give their comments at the end of the workshops. An invitation to discuss each topic may have resulted in more and richer comments.
2. Because the agenda items were unevenly presented, participant comments also were uneven.

Efficacy as a Community Engagement Process and Opportunity

Strengths

1. By building off of pre-existing workshops, the Spring workshops required less effort than the Fall workshops on the part of the principals.
2. The workshops were, by and large, pleasant, cordial events that allowed parents, community members and school staff to build rapport with their Board Members.

Improvables

1. Although Board Members planned to return to all 27 schools they had visited in the Fall this Spring, only 12 community workshops were held.
2. Board Members were not able to attend 2 of 12 Board engagement workshops that were held in the Spring. In one instance, the Board Member communicated their expected absence and asked a Family and Community Office staff member to present and convey their remarks. In another instance, the workshop was delayed for half an hour as the Principal, School Site Council and Family Community Office staff waited for a Board Member who never arrived.

Mid-Program Changes Affecting Spring Program Performance

The plan for the second round of community workshops was interrupted and altered by:

- the superintendent search process
- budget concerns

Schools that did not have a second round workshop will receive newsletters updating them on information from their respective OUSD Board representatives.

VI. Outcomes of Spring Board Engagement Process

There were two intended outcomes from the Spring Board Engagement Process.

1. The Board would share how community input from the Fall has informed key policy decisions.
2. Parents/Caregivers would learn how their Increased Engagement can help academic achievement.

Intended Outcome #1: The Board will share how community input from the Fall has informed key policy decisions.

While community input from the Fall was referenced at 5 community workshops, at only 2 workshops was community input discussed in detail. However, at each of the 5 workshops where community input was referenced in the presentation, it was directly tied to the presentation of the Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning and Achievement.

Intended Outcome #2: Parents/Caregivers will learn how their Increased Engagement can help academic achievement.

Parent engagement was not extensively discussed at any of the Spring community workshops. Increasing parent engagement was presented as a successful school strategy at 3 of the 12 schools. Opportunities for community input were most commonly highlighted in discussions about the superintendent search.

VII. Recommended Changes to Board Engagement Process

Over the 2009-2010 school year, the district will need to engage the Oakland community about two important topics in addition to focusing attention on to its docus on the priority of quality instruction:

1. Budget Cuts
2. Portfolio Management (school closures, restructuring & consolidation)

At the same time, the new Superintendent plans to develop an integrated community engagement strategy for the district. Despite these pressing issues, we recommend that the Board continue to focus on its strategic priority of quality instruction to improve academic achievement. Specifically, we recommend that the school-based component of the Board Engagement plan be developed based on the findings and recommendations from the 2008/2009 Community Workshops Pilot. There are three main changes proposed to the 2009/2010 plan:

1. Instead of holding large, workshops with individual school communities, Board Members would meet individually or with clusters of the School Site Councils from the elementary, middle and high schools in their district.
2. Principals and School Site Council members would receive training to hold preparatory discussions at SSC meetings about whatever will be the priority topics for discussion with the school community as determined by the board and Superintendent. After these preparatory discussions, SSC members would identify policy needs to communicate to their Board Members during board engagement workshops referred to in item 1, above.

3. The board engagement process would inform and be informed by the Single Plan for Student Achievement development process.

The School Site Council Workshops model is an attempt to refine the pilot effort to improve manageability in terms of Board Member time and make use of and add value to pre-existing parent engagement structures and processes, such as the School Site Councils and the Single Plan for Student Achievement. The Board of Education would work with the Board Secretary's Office, the Family Community Office, School Portfolio Management, the Network Executive Officers, the District Advisory Committee, the Office of the Chief Academic Officer and external consultants to complete the necessary preparatory work to effectively execute this plan.

Objectives for 2009-10

1. Identify school-level strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that are shared by schools across the city or within a region of the city that affect a schools' capacity to provide quality instruction and improve academic achievement.
2. Based on the input received through the Board-Community engagement process and other data and information, develop Board-level policies that effectively increase the capacity of schools to improve student academic achievement.
3. Establish supportive and accountable working relationships between the Board of Education, Superintendent, and school leaders.
4. Build the capacity of School Site Councils to:
 - a. Assess school level data & strategies
 - b. Communicate their policy needs to their Board Member.
5. Build the capacity of Principals to engage School Site Councils in discussion about school level data and strategies.

Activities

1. October / November 2009

A. Training

At the School Site Council Summit, staff from the Family Community Office, School Portfolio Management, the Office of the Chief Academic Officer and external consultants will work with the District Advisory Committee to train SSC members on:

- How to recognize and support quality instruction.
- How to use data and instructional improvement strategies to inform the "Single Plan for Student Achievement" and their workshops with board members about policy needs.
- Effective charting methods.

Network Executive Officers will work with the Office of the Chief Academic Officer, School Portfolio Management and external consultants to train principals on how to present to and engage school Site Councils in discussion about:

- How to recognize and support quality instruction.
- Data on school performance.
- School improvement strategies and district recommended strategies.

B. Preparatory Discussions

Principals at participating schools will lead discussions at SSC meetings about academic achievement and instructional improvement strategies . After these discussions, SSC members will identify policy needs to communicate to their Board Members during board-engagement workshops.

C. Common Planning Time

Board Workshops must be planned with the direct involvement of the Principals, School Site Council leadership, Board and Family and Community Office staff, and the Board member. Planning tasks include agenda-setting, meeting facilitation format, resource identification and participant outreach.

D. Materials Production

External Consulting staff will work cooperatively with staff from the Board Office, the Family Community Office, School Portfolio Management, the Network Executive Officers, the District Advisory Committee, and the Office of the Chief Academic Officer to develop workbooks for School Site Council members. These workbooks will include data and information to guide discussion on the following topics:

- The purpose of the board engagement workshop;
- The purpose of the single plan for student achievement;
- School performance data;
- Instructional improvement strategies; and
- Space for members to describe their school's policy needs.

2. November 2009

Each Board Member will lead workshops with SSC's from individual sites or clusters of sites at the elementary, middle and high school level located in their electoral district.

Each workshop will be supported with trained facilitators, recorders, and translators.

Content from each workshop will be summarized and an executive summary of all workshops will be produced.

3. December 2009 / January 2010

The Board will analyze common issues emerging from workshop summaries, and will act on the need to:

- affirm or modify existing Board policy, or develop new Board policy; and
- establish next year's budget priorities.

4. February / March 2010

A. Materials Production

In Spring 2010, the staff and consultants will develop an update to the workbook for school site council members (mentioned under October/November Materials production) including:

- What the Board Member heard from each school;
- What the Board heard from the district as a whole;
- New instructional improvement strategies; and
- New Board policies informed by community input.

5. April/May 2010

Each Board Member will lead workshops with clusters of SSC's from the elementary, middle and high school level located in their electoral district. Each workshop will include discussion on:

- review of workshop purpose and objectives
- review of Board of Education Coherent Governance Framework
- review of Board of Education Results Policies
- review of input Board Members received from the Fall Community Workshops
- review of Board decisions influenced by input from School Site Council Workshops

Each workshop will be supported with trained facilitators, recorders, and translators.

Content from each workshop will be summarized and an executive summary of all workshops will be produced.

6. June/July 2010

The Board will analyze common issues emerging from workshop summaries, and will act on the need to:

- affirm or modify existing Board policy, or develop new Board policy; and
- affirm or modify next year's budget priorities.

- The community engagement policy and approach for the following academic year

VIII. General Policy Recommendations

A. Methods to Engage Families around Quality Instruction

The Board's Strategic Priority to Accelerate Student Learning and Achievement focuses on high quality instruction in every classroom. It follows that an important part of any discussion of student achievement and school performance would include dialogue around high quality instruction. This is a challenging topic, particularly because parents and family members may not have experienced high quality instruction themselves. Urban Strategies recommends that the district continue its efforts to develop tools and training for principals, board members and Network Executive Officers on how to educate and engage parents and families around their participation in how to identify and support high quality instruction.

B. Strengthening and Utilizing School Site Governance Bodies

Opportunities for Board Members to interact with their constituents are vital to the good governance of the school district. However, effective school-community engagement requires good planning and sustained efforts and should be the ongoing work of the school site through its representative parent and/or community bodies and community partners. In order to gather more input relevant to policy considerations, the Board Members should consider holding Board-community engagement meetings with the representative bodies such as School Site Council (SSC) and English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC).

It is difficult to plan and conduct an effective convening for the Board if the school does not have a regular practice of effectively engaging parents and other stakeholders. The vehicles for regular parent engagement already exist in the form of bodies such as the SSC, ELAC and other groups. A convening of the sort recommended here would be more effective if the parent-stakeholder participatory groups were more active and were regularly tapped into to generate material that could be delivered to the board members.

The Board engagement efforts should utilize district resources to build the capacities of SSC and ELAC to enable them to fully participate in parent engagement, support and school site planning. Representatives from high-functioning SSC's and ELAC's are able to support parents to elicit parent concerns and recommendations in order to discuss policy issues with their Board Members. Reinforcing the pre-existing governance bodies is an integrated, long-term investment in parent engagement and district governance.

C. Strengthening Relationships with Community Organizations

Effective community engagement across the district must be supported by effective relationships with the community organizations that serve Oakland students, their families, and communities. We recommend that the policy and processes of community engagement be integrated with the district's exploration and consideration of community school models.

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