

# 4 Years of “Making A-G Real”

OUSD Meaningful Student Engagement and Da Town Researchers

present

2012-2013 Collaborative Student Action Research Report

focused on

Social, Emotional and Academic Student Support





## Introduction

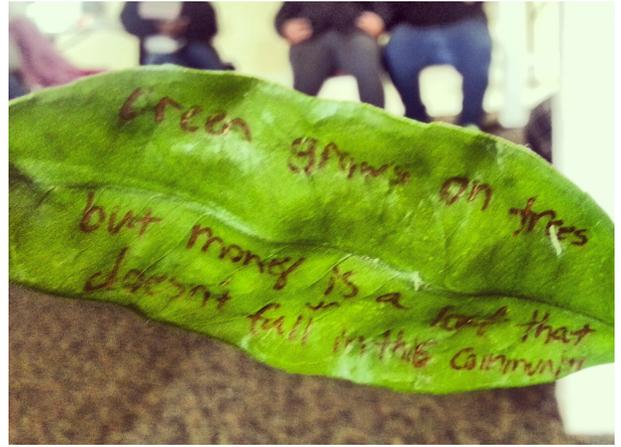
During the 2012-13 school year, a collaborative group of Oakland Unified School District student leaders from All City Council, Meaningful Student Engagement, and Da Town Researchers worked together to gather stories, voices and data from their peers about Student Support and School Culture at their schools. The focus of the research and data collection builds on prior years research and priority areas identified by students to fully implement the “Making A-G Real” campaign. Students deliberated and voted on the issue areas they wanted to focus on. Decisions about the issue areas were voted on at the student-led Youth Action Summit in May of 2012 and subsequent youth planning retreats.

In a continued effort to 1) empower youth and increase youth voice in OUSD, 2) have full implementation of “Making A-G Real”, 3) have the youth recommendations incorporated into the strategic plan, 4) lift up the experiences of young people in schools, and 5) better understand what support students need to be fully prepared for life, college and careers, this collaborative group did participatory action research to find out how students in OUSD define social, emotional and academic support, and what they need to be safe, fully supported, and partners in developing school culture. Our student action research also captured student voice on disciplinary practices and policies in place at respective school sites.

Throughout the year we partnered with district leaders who are driving the Social and Emotional Learning initiative as well as the School Quality Review process



DTR team conducts a Focus Group with students at Oakland International High School as a part of the School Quality Review.



“Green grows on trees”

and the Voluntary Resolution Plan. We also collaborated with community based organizations throughout the city. The alignment of our collaborative work, provided us with rich findings that culminated in district-wide student recommendations to improve school culture and fully support students socially, emotionally and academically.

## Who We Are:

**Meaningful Student Engagement (MSE)** is a community-district partnership to increase student leadership and engagement in schools. It includes All City Council students and youth organizations.

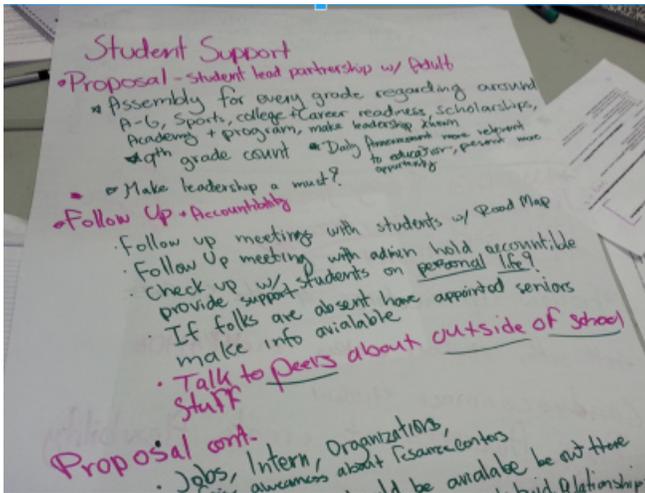
**MSE Collaborative in 2012-13:** Youth Together, Californians for Justice (CFJ), Oakland Kids First, All City Council, BAY-Peace, Youth Alive, Da Town Researchers, LIBRE @ Fremont H.S.

**Da Town Researchers** is the research wing of All City Council that conducts student-led research and evaluation across the school district in an effort to coordinate and bring together data from many student groups and participation in the district’s School Quality Review (SQR) process.

**I-SEED** (Institute for Sustainable Economic, Educational and Environmental Design) is an education and training non-profit organization focused on developing low-income youth, and youth of color from historically marginalized communities, and their adult allies, to be the next generation of ‘solutionists’ in fields including health equity, nutrition education, education transformation, environmental sustainability and community centered economic development without displacing people from their homes and communities.

## 2012-13 Research Collaborators:

- \* Da Town Researchers (DTR), ISEED
- \* All City Council (ACC) Governing Board
- \* Meaningful Student Engagement (MSE) Collaborative
- \* CBO Partners: Californians For Justice, BAY Peace, Oakland Kids First!, Youth Uprising, Youth Together, Youth Alive, East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC), Destiny Arts, Girls Inc. of Alameda County, Higher Ground, Catholic Charities, Safe Passages, BACR, Alternatives in Action, LIBRE - Spanish Speaking Citizens Foundation, OUSD HS After School Programs, OUSD Engagement, Center for Healthy Schools and Communities, Alameda County Health Care Services.



Youth from the MSE Collaborative collectively decided on Student Support and School Culture to focus their research on.

## Student Action Research Process:

1. Political & Cultural Education and Culture Building
2. Research Design and Planning
  - \* Develop Research Questions
  - \* Create Research Protocols for Focus Groups, Interviews and Observations
3. Data Collection and Organization
4. Data Analysis
5. Develop Recommendations and Present

## Student Research Question:

*What needs to happen to ensure that all students in OUSD get the emotional, social, and academic support they need in order to break the cycle of violence and oppression in Oakland?*

## Focus Areas of Research:

- **Student Support**
  - Social Support
  - Emotional Support
  - Academic Support
- **School Culture and Climate**
  - Discipline Policies and Practices

## Student Vision of Student Support:

*We need social, emotional and academic support in order to...*

- ...be prepared to handle life and work after school, face obstacles, and get the critical education we need and deserve;
- ...make sure students younger than us have the resources they need to succeed and pursue a lifestyle they want;
- ...go to a school like Yale feeling prepared for the work, stress and adjustment to college life;
- ...help our struggling people have the resources we need to survive, so we can get out of the war we are fighting on the streets and in the school system;
- ...make sure students of all races and ethnicities have equitable education to be college ready and have professional jobs.

## Student Vision of Safety in Schools:

*Community, parents, students, teachers, and staff work together to maintain safe & healthy schools everyday.*

## **Student Definitions:**

***SOCIAL SUPPORT:*** *Help from our teachers, parents, peers and others. Social support helps students to feel safe at all times on campus, and open up to not feeling shy. It is a partnership between adults and youth to strengthen the voices of students, improve communication, and build a great community within the school. Social support helps prepare students for life after high school so they have a roadmap to achieve goals.*

*Knowing that you have all the resources you need to succeed, and that there is someone who has your back inside and outside of school.*

***EMOTIONAL SUPPORT:*** *Having youth and adults to be around, and to talk to at school, who you feel comfortable with. Emotional support is when you can get personal support with personal problems from someone at school, the community or your peers. It is getting support from someone who motivates you and doesn't judge you.*

*Emotional support is knowing all adults on campus are properly trained to value, understand, and support the well being and cultures of all students. We need adults at schools who provide support by showing students they are willing to listen, give advice, and act on personal problems that students in stressful situations go through.*

## **Collaborative Methodology:**

At the beginning of the 2012-13 school year we began preparing to visit select School Quality Review (SQR) schools (Bret Harte and Edna Brewer Middle Schools and Oakland International High School). We prepared by discussing what we would do during our school visits. We were trained in different techniques of data collection, and understood ways to use those skills during our visits. We also got focused as a research team on the theme of Student Support, that we looked for during our research, and identified different things that told us about that theme (indicators).

In the schools, we did interviews, class observations, focus groups, and overall observations around the school. We collected our data from what students said about whether they had support at their school, or not,

and we also got information from our observations in the hallways, classes, and outside the school.

The student researchers and collaborative partners created and distributed a question protocol for fish bowls, focus groups and interviews to 32 elementary, middle and high schools throughout OUSD. In addition, Da Town Researchers partnered with OUSD's adult School Quality Review (SQR) team to insert student voice and perspective into the efforts of reviewing select schools in the district. Student researchers applied the lens of student support (social, emotional and academic) to the SQR process. Student researchers looked at indicators such as relationships, adult/student communication, student voice, and engagement. As part of the SQR, student researchers conducted focus groups, observations and interviews at Edna Brewer Middle School, Bret Harte Middle School and Oakland International High School. Many of the student researcher's indicators, findings and recommendations align with and expand on OUSD's Social and Emotional Learning standards work.

Student voices were gathered from comprehensive, small, continuation, international, middle and high schools in an effort to compare and contrast similar themes and differences, highlight the most prominent themes, and get the most representative sample of Oakland students. We were able to analyze thirteen data sets, all from different school sites. These findings and recommendations are supported with analyzed data from 5 of 12 total middle schools, and 8 of 10 total high schools that data was gathered from.

Data collection tools included fishbowl sessions with adults and students, student interviews, student and teacher focus groups, observations, and notes from DTR and MSE collaborative meetings. Student researchers reached over 100 students and collected data from 18 focus groups and over 10 interviews in 13 schools. Students also interviewed a number of teachers throughout Oakland high schools. CBO partners collected data from focus groups at 19 additional schools

In addition, Da Town Researchers collaborated with the School Quality Review team to compare, contrast and connect the broader MSE collaborative findings to the OUSD adult SQR evaluation team's review of select schools in the district.

## Collaborative Data Analysis:

After collecting data sets from middle and high schools across the district, Da Town Researchers, in collaboration with Meaningful Student Engagement youth leaders, made meaning of the data themselves at a series of data analysis retreats, and lead All City Council student representatives through a critical analysis process at the annual Youth Action Summit in May 2012.

After going out to all SQR school sites, students looked at the data and began finding common themes about Student Support from all of the schools. When student researchers found many common themes at the school sites visited, they created a main sentence or finding to explain the data connected to the common themes.

At the DTR all-day student data analysis retreat, that included student researchers and MSE student leaders who supported the data collection process, students identified common themes, grouped supporting data and evidence according to the themes, discussed outliers and created findings for the strongest groups of data. Students compared similarities and differences, and highlighted the most prominent themes. The data analysis was grounded in the student definitions of social, emotional, and academic support, and tied to the development of the overarching research question.

After creating the findings, the student researchers looked for additional supporting evidence. When there was a lot of supporting evidence, they focused on the main pieces of data heard from the most students. The teams created many findings and wrote them into the report. When opportunities for presentations came about the student researchers focused on the main findings that they saw happening in most schools they visited, and in the community around them.

In addition, Da Town Researchers collaborated with the School Quality Review team to compare, contrast and connect the broader MSE collaborative findings to the OUSD adult evaluation team's review of certain schools in the district.

## School Communities We Heard From:

- *Middle and Elementary Schools - Bret Harte; Frick; Bret Harte; Community Day; Edna Brewer; Elmhurst; Roots International; Roosevelt; United*

*for Success; Urban Promise Academy; West Oakland and Sankofa.*

- *High Schools - Oakland International; Oakland Tech; Oakland; Skyline; Coliseum College Preparatory Academy; Dewey; Fremont; McClymonds; MetWest; Life Academy.*
- *CBO Focus Groups*

## Findings & Recommendations:

*The findings and recommendations below are grounded in data gathered from the 2012-13 collaborative student-led action research project, in addition to 5 years of data collected from student action research projects. The voices of Oakland students represented in these recommendations reflect and expand the student experiences represented in the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data and OUSD's Voluntary Resolution Plan (VRP) suspension data.*

*The following findings summarize interview, focus group, and fishbowl data collected and highlight how student experiences with discipline policies and practices, and the social, emotional, and academic support needs of students, have impacted a wide range of Oakland Unified School District students.*



Meaningful Student Engagement collaborative youth leaders decide on the specific research focus at MSE's winter retreat.

*We are confident that recommendations reflect a wide range of experiences and schools in OUSD, as many of them mirror student recommendations from years prior.*

## SAFETY & SCHOOL CLIMATE

### Finding #1 : Racism and Discipline

**Discipline policies and practices across schools in OUSD are inconsistent. Student experience with discipline varies greatly depending on race, gender, history at the school, behavior ‘profile’, and relationship with school staff and teachers.**

### Supporting Data:

Students in a focus group of young African American men in middle school stated:

- “On Campus Suspension (OCS) is basically like a chill out room.”
- “I think they should take away *solo seat* and referrals to OCS, this is middle school. At this school they try to treat you like they own you. If they were more kind about what they need us to do, and the consequences, most kids would listen.”
- “OCS is not even a punishment, it is a hangout spot that all the cool kids go to. All the kids go there because they do not want to be in class.”
- “OCS just makes people not want to learn. I have literally witnessed people asking if they can go to OCS.”
- “OCS is over used and the discipline system is not consistent they do not always go through the five steps, they only go through like two, and then they send you out.”

### Vision:

*OUSD Schools should have mentors from the community who have been through similar everyday struggles in Oakland, helping students get through their struggles outside of school, as well as helping them deal with conflicts that happen inside of school. The goal is that 1) later on the conflicts do not escalate to street problems, and 2) that adults who can relate are around school so students are able to have someone who understands them and motivates them to not drop out of school. A school code of conduct should be an equal expectation from all adults on campus.*

**Recommendation:** Adult and Student Code of Conduct

- **We, OUSD students, recommend a clear, transparent and co-created code of conduct for adults and students at all high schools in OUSD.**
- We, OUSD students, recommend that the co-created Code of Conduct be used as a tool for communication, relationship building, accountability, and mutual respect. As students, we are subjected to disciplinary processes when we do not adhere to adult rules. However, there is no such accountability for adult school staff.
- We recommend a school wide co-created Code of Conduct and Respect at all high schools. This code of conduct will outline the expectations around behavior for students, teachers, administrators, and other staff. This code of conduct must be site-specific, and co-developed with representatives from the student body, teachers, administration, other staff, school site security guards and all other interested stakeholders.
- We recommend that the Code-of-Conduct be visible at three separate locations on the school sites, the bathroom, all classrooms, and the attendance office.

**Recommendation:** Full Implementation and Evaluation of Restorative Justice

- We recommend district-wide full implementation and evaluation of culturally relevant and community responsive restorative justice processes in all schools, rather than punitive approaches for school policies and practices. (adapted from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).

## SAFETY & SCHOOL CLIMATE

### Finding #2 : Racism and Discipline

**OUSD students are affected in their school lives because of racism, (sometimes called favoritism in focus groups), when they are trying to change their behavior in school and achieve academically.**



***“I feel as if the students and teachers should be trained, not to discipline, but on how to sit down and resolve”***

*~ Student Researcher*

**Sub-finding:** Students feel that teachers are the gatekeepers for their future.

**Sub-finding:** Students feel that if teachers stop practicing favoritism and are respectful, equitable and consistent with the discipline system, they can succeed academically.

**Sub-finding:** Whether concerning punishment and discipline, approach to teaching, and opportunities for advancement, all student/teacher interactions are based on the teacher’s belief system, their emotional state of mind on any given day, or their perception of the student. There is not a consistent system for teachers to be accountable to students and their families.

**Sub-finding:** To be properly supported, students feel like they need to stop being judged based on actions they have committed in the past. Students want equity and fairness for all students.

**Supporting Data:**

- “Everyone gets treated differently and it’s so unfair”
- “They think if they get the Black troublemakers out of the school, they think they school will be perfect”
- “They punish students who are labeled or known as bad kids even if two students do the same thing”
- “Teachers don’t like me, the racist teachers show favoritism towards one race”
- “Most students here feel like they are judged and disciplined based on things you have done in the past. The students that get in trouble more get disciplined more strictly than a student that don’t get in trouble a lot, even if they are being disciplined for the same thing”
- *How can discipline be fair?* -- “try to be fair (student researcher: “i feel as if the students and teachers should be trained, not to discipline, but on how to sit down and resolve.”)
- “Sometimes teachers are fair and sometimes not - sometimes you get in trouble even if you are talking about school - if you are talking to a good student then sometimes the good kid doesn’t get in trouble”
- “Same discipline may not work for all students”



*Da Town Researchers observe campus culture and climate as a part of the School Quality Review process.*

- “Teachers are all different in handling discipline policies; they take it into their own hands.”
- “The way they try to communicate, it’s disrespectful sometimes and makes you more mad.”
- “I don’t like when the teacher says something disrespectful but when you say something back you get in trouble.”

**Vision:**

*The Oakland Unified School District’s All City Council student union and Meaningful Student Engagement collaborative believe that relationships between SSO’s, teachers, administrators, all other adult staff on school campuses throughout the district, and the student body, are essential to improving the school culture and climate in our schools and throughout the district. We, OUSD students, believe that clear, consistent, reciprocal expectations of adults and students are critical to a positive and safe school culture.*

**Recommendation: Adult Feedback**

- **We, OUSD students, recommend biannual student evaluations of all school staff.**
- We, OUSD students, believe that student feedback about school staff will help provide areas of growth that need to be focused on for professional development. In order to have a positive school culture, school sites [and all bodies present] have to shift and change as areas of



Student researcher interviews students about support at their school.

improvement and needs are identified. Student feedback will be one important avenue to begin recognizing changes that are necessary and improve student and adult relationships.

- Student feedback evaluations will not be reflected on teachers’ professional evaluation, instead, used to begin dialogue around what needs to be improved.
- We recommend student participation in the **hiring and review** of school administrators, and development of a **360-degree support & review system** to give feedback on administrators as effective school leaders. (from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).

**QUALITY TEACHING**

**Finding #3 : School Staff - Students agree they deserve a quality education; where school staff and administrators interact with students with mutual respect, instead of a school where teachers and administrators are disrespectful, unprofessional, and practice favoritism.**

**Supporting Data:**

- “I don’t understand why the Administration works here if they are so rude to us and our parents.”
- “Building a teacher and student relationship is good but there is a lot of favoritism.”
- “Certain teachers are rude like a teacher exposed a students status as a ‘special education student’ the teacher didn’t get in trouble because they had a baby by one of the administrators.”
- “Teachers should teach, if we have questions they should answer them insightfully and clearly.”
- “When they help it makes you feel stupid.”
- “If a teacher is liked by a lot of students then they would most likely get away with things.”
- “Some teachers are lazy and on their phone but when a principal walks in they put it away. [My teacher] says that when someone important walks in she can call on two smart kids in the class to make her look good.”

## Vision:

*Students want more experienced teachers who know and understand where students come from, better administrators and better teacher/student relationships; increased accountability for teachers and administrators and for adults to not take out their moods on students. Everybody who is part of the community should be treated equally, especially those who are disabled, students with an IEP, and bilingual students.*

## Recommendation : Student Input in Hiring

- **We, OUSD students, recommend a student hiring committee for all incoming teachers, administrators, security and other staff.**
- We recommend a student hiring committee, at each high school, that has decision-making power to influence who enters our school environments.
- We recommend that student hiring committees must be site-specific and consist of students, elected by the student body through school-wide elections at the beginning of the year. All students must have a fair opportunity to serve on these hiring committees, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, academic performance, or history with discipline.
- We recommend that student hiring committees must be engaged through OUSD Human Resources Department in developing the inter-



Students at the MSE retreat voted on the research topic area of Student Support and Safety.

view questions, serving on the hiring panel, and having an equal vote and voice in selecting the best candidates for their school.

- We recommend student participation in the **hiring and review** of school administrators, and development of a **360-degree support & review system** to give feedback on administrators as effective school leaders. (from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).

## QUALITY TEACHING

**Finding #4** : “Give Respect, Get Respect.”

**Across OUSD students said having teachers who act like parental figures by showing they authentically care and are helpful, as opposed to having teachers who act as authority figures, improved their motivation for school, the learning environment and their overall academic success.**

**Sub-finding:** Students across the district agree that having positive student/teacher relationships includes building from a place of cultural humility with values that promote mutual respect.

### Supporting Data:

- “Something that I really like about this school is that our teachers are really helpful, it can be both academically and personally, even if you have a personal problem.”
- A student at an Oakland middle school stated, “[My teacher] will give us a solution to solve the problem, he will try to give you information that will help you solve it.”

*When asked in a focus group if they thought having teachers who authentically care about them was important, students at a High School in Oakland said:*

- “It’s very important because teachers are like our second parents, we see them more than we see our real parents, and if they give us that attention we need, we can succeed.”
- “It’s really important because teachers can see, and help, the students who try hard but need help.”



DTR presents their preliminary findings to the community.

- “It’s really important to me because it shows that I have people who believe in me, and sometimes you might want to give up, and sometimes you might not believe in yourself, but the teachers motivate you and the teachers tell you ‘hey, I know you can do this.’ Even recently something like that happened and I’m really grateful for that because the teachers here, they do whatever they can to help us.
- “The teachers are helpful so I love to come to this school.”
- “Sometimes, the teachers can help you. Sometimes they even take time outside of their class schedules and all that to help us, so I really like that about this school.”

### **Recommendation: Student-Led Trainings**

- **We, OUSD students, recommend student-led trainings, in partnership with adult allies, about the realities of youth culture and life in Oakland, for all new and returning teachers, SSO’s, administrators, and other staff, throughout OUSD.**
- We, OUSD students, believe we are experts in our experience as students. Adding our voices to the development of curriculum, instruction, and relationships with our teachers is instrumental to our academic, social, and emotional success.
- We recommend a mandatory student-led week long training for all district teachers, administrators, SSO’s, and other staff, on racism, sexism and oppression, and the experiences and realities of students in Oakland. In addition, re-

lationship-building activities will be included in these trainings, such as ropes courses, dyads and other team building and relationship building activities.

- We recommend that these trainings take place every summer and be facilitated by All City Council delegates.
- We recommend that students be compensated for their time to develop and facilitate the trainings.
- We recommend engaging community based organizations to co-lead trainings focused on the cultures and backgrounds of students, using an Ethnic Studies framework, to further support and train students.
- We recommend Oakland-based and **community-based curriculum, using Ethnic-studies frameworks** and resources, to engage students in neighborhoods and address inter-racial conflicts in schools and community, supported by partnerships with community groups, including community service and internships for school credit. (from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).
- We recommend **professional development** co-led by students (in a non-tokenizing way) and highly evaluated teachers that incorporates student feedback and evaluation data. (from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).

## **SAFETY & SCHOOL CLIMATE**

### **Finding #5 : Outside Factors**

**Students in OUSD face overwhelming stress and pressure, inside and outside of school, and find it challenging to balance their responsibilities, while succeeding academically, as young people growing up in Oakland.**

### **Supporting Data:**

- Most of the students we talked to in focus groups said they have big responsibilities with their

families, and that this is a challenge for them in school.

- “Outside of school there is work, programs and sports; it distracts us from schoolwork.”
- “Sometimes you get frustrated when you’re thinking about your family, or your life, so every time my family tells me like be responsible, I don’t like to be responsible. I am the oldest of my family and I have to look after my family a lot.”
- Many students that student researchers heard from, talked about having family problems outside of school that kept them from being as focused as possible in school.

### 2009-10 DTR Recommendations:

#### *Increase Youth Program Alignment*

- We recommend further aligning youth programs with schools to create more community building opportunities. (2012-13 “4 Years of Making A-G Real” Collaborative Action Research Report).
- We recommend youth programs be more aligned with schools to create more community building opportunities. (from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).
- We recommend **coordination and planning meetings** with wellness coordinators, administrators, school staff, and teachers to shift the culture of each school toward support for students that believes in their abilities to reach their goals, and



Community mural at one of the High Schools in Oakland that student researchers visited to collect data.

fully supports them. (from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).

- The development of **classroom cultures that foster healthy, positive, and community-oriented learning environments**, including more collaborative projects, relevant and fun curriculum, and the development of shared community agreements along with a school-wide Code of Conduct. (from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).

**“Students developing to be leaders and being able to communicate with teachers to get what they want and need is social support, because developing those leadership skills causes a stronger voice that can be used to express opinions and let the adults know where we’re coming from and where we want to go.”**

## STUDENT SUPPORT

### Finding #6 : Family and Community Support

Students need someone positive they can fall back on. Oakland students feel they need someone besides family or school staff, ideally someone from the community, to check-in with, beyond academics.

### Supporting Data:

What are factors **outside school** that prevent you from focusing and doing well in school?

- “Things you’re doing, things that are going on with you emotionally, maybe you might be stressed about something, maybe something might be happening at home so, having someone to talk to and share those things with, and someone maybe to advise you, someone you know you can turn to. [like a peer coach]”
- “Factors that students face growing up in Oakland”

- “Family and financial issues, the community, violence, pregnancy, relationships”
- “Family issues, school might not be for you, money problems”

**Vision:**

*Having people to talk to about the problems in school, and outside of school, will help students with the academic parts of school, and help to provide them with more emotional support.*

**Recommendations: Community-Based Support**

- We recommend school cultures that are welcoming, safe, and caring to the community. We recommend [the school] engages and partners with students, families and more, and values individual and cultural differences.
- We recommend establishing wellness centers at each school site to coordinate with county and city services and provide youth the ability to connect with community resources, including; emotional support and counseling, social support, academic support, financial planning and employment and career opportunities, access to academic tutors, access to food, clothing, and shelter, health care, child care, and awareness of community issues.
- We recommend **Youth Wellness Centers** at every school for physical, academic, and mental health support programs to provide a coordinated, integrated system of community resources throughout the school to fully support students. (from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).



Student leaders at the MSE collaborative retreat study the OUSD Student Engagement Standards.

**“I don’t like when the teacher says something disrespectful but when you say something back you get in trouble.”**

**STUDENT SUPPORT**

**Finding #7 : Student Support Systems**

**Students want encouragement, one-on-one time with teachers, and support outside of school, without getting too personal with teachers, to succeed socially and emotionally at school.**

**Supporting Data:**

*What does Social Support mean to you?*

- *“..helping people with their problems, counseling, personal support..”*
- *“..support outside of school..”*

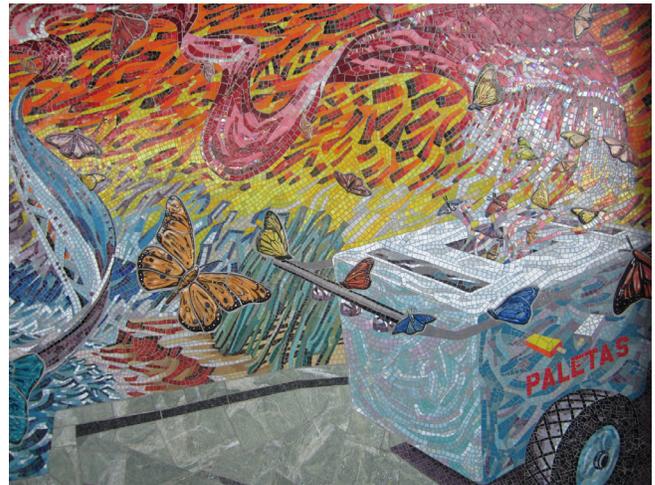
*Student Researchers say:*

- *“Showing students that you are there to help them gives students a feeling of being heard, especially with issues outside of school”*
- *“Social support in my perspective is basically help or assistance for students or youth who are not comfortable or confident to speak up or communicate.”*
- *“Social support is when students feel safe at all times on campus and they have access to a youth center and youth programs to build a community within the school.”*
- *“Social support is when the people around you get to know you.”*
- *“Social support is when there’s a good source of communication between everybody in the school. Counseling services and students developing a strong youth voice.”*
- *“Social support is when community members promote getting an education and inspire you to go to college (like the movie ‘The Interrupters’).”*

- “Social support is when your environment and the people around you are supporting you. Someone who wants you to get more open. To help you know how to open up and not be shy. Teachers help you out to communicate better with them.”
- **“Social support is help from your teachers, peers, parents, and others. It’s for students to feel safe at all times on campus & open up to feel shy. It’s a partnership between adults and youth to strengthen their voices, communication, build great community within the school, and prepare students for life after high school.”**
- “When the school sets goals and activities to bring the students, families and communities together.”
- “Strengthening someone’s voice and respecting them is social support because it gives them a feeling of standing up for what’s right.”

What does Emotional Support mean to you?

- **“Emotional support is when you feel comfortable telling your stories”**
- **“Emotional support in my own opinion is help or assistance for students and the problems they are affected by emotionally (to listen and try to do something about it.)”**
- “Counselors and close friends that motivate you to do good and are there to help you on lows.”
- “Emotional support is when people see something wrong with you and they are there for you, like asking what’s wrong and saying that they’re somebody you can always talk too. Someone you can open up with emotionally without being judged.”
- “Kids are able to say their thoughts without anybody yucking their yum.”
- “Youth needing more support from community members.”
- “..control over our feelings.”



Community mural at one of the High Schools in Oakland that student researchers visited to collect data.

Students reported in focus groups:

- “Stop pretending like you know where we come from.”
- “Do not get too much into our personal things.”
- “..don’t ask too personal [of] questions”
- “..let students have a little individual time with each teacher.”
- “..teachers should be available when students make time.”
- “..teachers should support not just through tests and grading, more individual close time to understand the material and more participation and classwork weighted.”
- “If students had more support with certain things then they might feel more comfortable. This can also dictate how students react in situations.”
- More than half the students we gathered data from said their relationship with counselors isn’t good, or they don’t have a counselor at all.

### Recommendations:

- We recommend strengthening youth voice to reveal what really goes on in schools, and what needs to be done to improve academic learning, and increase interpersonal learning among students. Giving the silent a voice can create amazing and beautiful ideas to help students academically.

- We recommend having advisory class systems that support students through group counseling. Increased counseling services will support kids who need help, but usually get it from their peers.
- **We recommend supporting and improving communication that centers youth voice with adults. This type of communication will support students by helping adults to understand what's emotionally affecting students, because it can hurt their grades. If we have a youth-led conversation, students who are struggling with problems at home can express it to a counselor with groups, so they can discuss ways to help the affected students.**
- **We recommend creating the conditions for families and school staff to have trusting relationships and the ability to engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student well being and progress.**
- **We recommend providing students with health and emotional services.**
- We recommend having student counseling support from OUSD alumni, advisory class system, peer-to-peer academic and college support (such as PASS-2 program at Tech, O-High & McClymonds), community volunteers and mentors, and partnerships with community organizations. (from "Making A-G Real" Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).



*Student researcher interviews students during lunch observations.*

**“Social support is help from your teachers, peers, parents, and others. It’s for students to feel safe at all times on campus & open up to feel shy. It’s a partnership between adults and youth to strengthen their voices, communication, build great community within the school, and prepare students for life after high school.”**

## **STUDENT SUPPORT**

**Finding #8** : Support for African American Students

**Life events that happen outside of school both positively and negatively influence young African American men from an Oakland Middle School to attend, and stay in school.**

**Sub-finding:** Motivation to do well in school comes from factors outside of school, rather than from teachers, what teachers are teaching, how teachers are teaching, the school itself, or from anything else **WITHIN** the school. According to the data, when students were asked about what motivates them to come to school, none of the factors listed above were mentioned.

**Sub-finding:** Outside factors such as violence and death, family issues and drugs are all distractions from school that also motivate and drive young



*Students from the Meaningful Student Engagement collaborative share out proposed Recommendations.*



African American men in an Oakland Middle School to continue their education and succeed in life.

### Supporting Data:

*Students in a focus group of young African American men in an Oakland Middle School stated:*

- “I don’t want to be on the streets where I see people getting shot and stabbed and all that. I don’t want to be one of those people in the hospital, out there in jail or the people who are killing those people. I don’t even want to be the police because I would be scared to get shot.”
- “What motivates me [to stay in school] is not my half-brother, but my oldest brother by my mom and my dad. When I was 4 I seen him get killed and it was because he was doing the wrong things.”
- “What motivates me to stay in school is when I see people on the streets doing stuff, crack heads and stuff like that, I do not want to be like that because I want to have success in life. I don’t want to be a bum.”
- “I am bored so I would say the boredom and playing basketball is what motivates me.”
- “I don’t want to be out in the streets where I could get arrested or get killed, that’s why I come to school.”

### Vision:

*This data potentially demonstrates an emotional disconnect that students have with the school and the adults there. They are not emotionally invested, and have no personal ties to the school other than it being a place they must attend.*

### Recommendations:

- Youth programs should support school-site relationship building by hosting monthly weekend retreats with students, staff, family, friends and community members to establish a culture of safety, trust, mutual respect, humanity and community.
- Youth programs, and the school site, should support school culture and climate by having a mediation center that provides anger management counseling, conflict mediation, training for positive peer role models from the community, peer mentors, peer resources, violence prevention workshops, and restorative justice.
- Youth programs should support youth participation in these activities by providing weekend services and ensuring safe transportation to and from the programs (i.e. bus and BART passes, passenger vans, ridesharing, etc.).



ACC Governing Board & Da Town Researchers representatives attend the Free Minds, Free People conference in Chicago.



Da Town Researchers present their research process and preliminary findings at community symposium.



Student researchers and the All City Council governing board practice and prepare to present their research in Chicago.

## STUDENT SUPPORT

### Finding #9 : New Language, New Culture

*[Oakland International H.S. specific finding]*

**Newcomer students (at Oakland International High School) experience a large struggle with academics because they must adjust to a new language, new cultures and new environments. This compounds the challenges to succeed academically in their new school settings.**

### Supporting Data:

*What do you need support with?*

- “Some students haven’t been in school for maybe a year or two, or more than that, so coming here, learning a new language and then getting into the academics too, can be really challenging for us.”
- “We need better language classes for newcomers, mentors and teachers who speak the same home language, and after school programs and tutoring classes.”
- “Students who are migrating from different countries should have a little more time to adjust to the culture and language before they start doing challenging academic work.”

### Limitations and Lessons Learned:

Collaborating with so many research partners and young people to gather data from across the district was challenging. In order to include more data sets in the analysis, a lesson learned would be to have more analysis opportunities throughout the spring. Due to the increased number of sites where data was collected, data was submitted on a constant and rolling basis. An aspiration for this 2013-14 school year, is to continue themeing, connecting and analyzing evidence and data sets from additional school sites not originally included in the 2012-13 data analysis phase.

In an effort to align the student-led research with multiple district initiatives (such as School Quality Review, Social Emotional Learning, and the Voluntary Resolution Plan specifically), compact and sometimes competing timelines for connecting student voices and analysis was challenging. A lesson learned would be to expand the intentional scope, timeline, and budget for student voice/action research integration into the multiple district initiatives.

***“We need social, emotional and academic support in order to help our struggling people have the resources we need to survive, so we can get out of the war we are fighting on the streets and in the school system.”***

## Next Steps & Action:

- Fully fund and support youth-adult partnership in implementation of our student recommendations on Quality Teaching, Student Support, and School Culture.
- Present findings and recommendations to high school principals and work together to present recommendations to all site-based staff.
- Student leaders will work with principals to select priority recommendations and action steps for their school site, and design implementation together.
- Continued integration of student voice and recommendations in the **development and implementation of Social and Emotional K-12 Learning Standards**, and for schools to support and consider in school planning. (revised from “Making A-G Real” Student Support Systems 2009-10 Collaborative Action Research Report).

**Thank you to all who supported this work!**

