

**FINAL**



# **Oakland Unified School District**

## **Charter School Site Visit Report**

### **Oakland Charter High School**

**171 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Oakland, CA 94607**

**Site Coordinator: Jonathan Granucci  
New Teacher Support: Evelia Lopez**

**Date of review: February 26, 2009**

**Reviewer: David Montes de Oca**

**OUSD Office of Charter Schools**

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## Part 1: The School Context

### Information about the school

Oakland Charter High School (OCHS) is a small charter high school in its second year of operation. The school currently serves approximately 63 ninth and tenth grade students and is located in a commercial building in downtown Oakland. OCHS is one of two charter schools operating in Oakland under the same governing board sharing a single school model.

The mission of the Oakland Charter High School is:

*“Oakland Charter High School’s goal is to provide strong academic skills in Mathematics and English Literature to minority and socio-economically disadvantaged students. OCHS will serve 250 inner-city students in the ninth to twelfth grades. Since we believe that a high rate of student attendance is a way to ensure academic achievements in all subjects, OCHS will focus on achieving a 98% attendance rate. The curriculum is designed to enhance the academic skills of minority and socio-economically disadvantaged students by utilizing small, structured classrooms that will provide the discipline and individualized attention necessary for success. OCHS will also provide instruction to develop students’ academic skills in writing, science, social science, business and the humanities to make them productive members in a capitalist society. Achieving these goals will be a collaborative effort between school, family, and community members.”*

In 2008, OCHS achieved an Academic Performance Index (API) of 939. The school opened in 2007 serving grade 9 only, under the share leadership of Jorge Lopez, Executive Director of Oakland Charter Academy and Oakland Charter High School. In the current year the school is overseen by Site Coordinator, Jonathan Granucci, a former Oakland Charter Academy teacher.

## Part 2: Overview

### School Strengths:

- OCHS achieved an API score of 939 in its first year of operation.
- Classrooms are well equipped with standards-based instructional materials and consistent with the school's charter, classroom instruction was aligned to CA state standards. Classrooms include small libraries of books of varying genres and difficulty level.
- Teacher interactions with students were respectful, appropriate and supportive of a rigorous academic environment.
- OCHS leadership described the benefits of introducing grade-level meetings once a month where-in teachers within the same grade level meet with OCHS leadership to plan and request support.
- OCHS has begun filming teacher lessons as part of the school's teacher development practices. OCHS leadership acknowledged notable improvement in teacher practice as a result of the review and discussion of video-taped lessons. At the current time this is an individual practice between the teacher and administration, though the school is gradually developing staff capacity to eventually utilize this process as a peer observation strategy.
- Teacher lesson structure was evident in each classroom observed. Lesson opening, closing and transitions were effective. Teachers monitored lesson time to allow for both guided practice and independent practice.
- Student behavior was focused on work and students were on task virtually 100% of the time.
- *Consistent with the terms of the approved charter:*
  1. All ninth grade students receive geometry in preparation for either pre-calculus or calculus in the senior year.
  2. Coursework is consistent with the A-G requirements necessary for entry to UC/CSU systems.
  3. Observed Student :Teacher ratios ranged between 16:1 & 20:1 in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and 21:1 in 10<sup>th</sup> grade – terms of the charter indicates a student: teacher ratio of 25:1.
  4. Curriculum and instructional materials aligned to state standards were provided to students in all classrooms.
  5. Teaching methodology observed is lecture and teacher-directed.
- Evidence of academic rigor was present in each classroom (e.g)
  1. Teacher demand for correct answers and correcting errors
  2. Practice of requiring students to do "board-work", publicly demonstrating their understanding of the material
  3. Outlining requirements for social science assignments including "use complete sentences, restate question in responses, proper use of antecedents, sticking to one point at a time"

4. Wide range of grade level and above grade level novels were being taught in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes.
- Effective use of *realia* was observed in support of ELL students (e.g) soccer ball during discussion of moon's surface; three-dimensional geometric models created by students in Geometry
  - The facility was clean, orderly, and well kept. Classrooms maintained appropriate temperatures at a comfortable level.
  - While conservative in their décor, classrooms presented a text rich environment with content specific vocabulary and word walls present in all classrooms.
  - Effective use of strategies such as KWL's were present in various classroom's, evidencing attempts to access student's prior knowledge and set lesson goals.

## School Challenges:

- The school is currently located in a facility that has not yet met all of the CA Building Code requirements for educational use. As of November, 2008, the landlord has been notified of the issue and is currently researching solutions. OUSD staff will provide formal notice to the school of facility requirements prior to the close of the 2008-09 school year in an effort to ensure compliant occupancy is achieved.
- Academic programming opportunities within the school will be limited over time by the size of the facility space currently allocated to OCHS. The school has effectively prepared one classroom for lab science coursework up to and including physical science and biology. However the current facilities will not provide for the necessary chemistry lab coursework once the school begins to serve students in the eleventh grade in 2009-2010. OCHS leadership is currently in dialog with Merritt College regarding collaboration to allow for students to access advanced science lab coursework through the community college. This collaboration was predicted for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade based on the approved charter (pg. 55- Appendix E).
- OCHS has identified advanced study skills as a prerequisite for success in college. As a college preparatory high school, OCHS intends to further develop the study skills of students in an effort to apply school-wide expectations for those skills that are currently limited to either student specific or teacher specific use, such as note-cards or color-coded note taking strategies.
- OUSD staff noted discrepancies in student performance in 2008 based on gender. OUSD staff shared the following:

<b>2008 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Proficient/Advanced</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Difference</b>
English Language Arts	100%	86%	<b>14%</b>
Geometry	93%	80%	<b>13%</b>

OUSD staff acknowledged that the sample size was small and applied to only one grade level tested in 2008 (9<sup>th</sup>). OCHS leadership acknowledged that currently no specific efforts are in place to address the discrepancy; however the school discussed its intent to monitor student performance in order to identify possible trends that may be consistent with the 2008 performance of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students as outlined above.

OUSD staff pointed out that national performance trends are consistent with the discrepancies above. That said OUSD staff also acknowledged the school's commitment to interrupt these national trends and encouraged continued monitoring of student performance particularly with respect to gender, including possible mid-year assessments, to intervene if trends similar to the 2008 performance of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students emerges. Student performance across both genders, as evidenced above, is nonetheless extremely high.

## Part 3: Additional Findings

### Classroom observations on 2/26/09:

Mr. Becker – 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

Mr. Gaskin – 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

Mr. Tsitrin – 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Admissions**

OCHS leadership has been engaged in a dialog with the Office of Charter Schools (OUSD) regarding the school's admissions practices as of November, 2008. Over-all, the goal of the OUSD is to ensure all Oakland charter schools provide equal and equitable access to all students wishing to enroll. Historically, Oakland Charter Academy (6-8) and OCHS have utilized a multi-page application which includes a request for information typically reserved for a "registration" process following the initial offer of admission to the school. This information request, as part of the OCHS process, has included requesting teacher comments on report cards, as well as the provision of STAR CST test results. The OCHS leadership has stated that the requested information is not a factor in the admissions process.

As a result of the dialog between OCHS and OUSD, OCHS has acknowledged its intent to re-organize the requirements embedded in the initial application process beginning with the enrollment window for the 2010-2011. OCHS leadership has shared its commitment to employ a two-step process where-in an offer of placement is contingent on the provision of the necessary documents to be provided in a subsequent "registration". The school's efforts reflect a commitment to avoid the use of any admissions practices that may be construed as discriminatory or have the risk of allowing for preferential treatment to be given to any applicant that is not otherwise outlined in the school's approved charter agreement.

### **Self-Contained Classrooms**

The model employed at Oakland Charter Academy (6-8) is a self-contained model where-in students receive all core content instruction from the same teacher. OCHS has found that, while the self-contained model is highly effective for the middle grades, content expertise necessary for effective instruction in high schools requires further differentiation of staffing. For this reason, the school employs one teacher at each grade level to deliver the English language arts and social sciences content, and one teacher at each grade level to deliver the mathematics and science content.

### **Teacher Certification**

On February 25, 2009, it came to the attention of the OUSD that one teacher assigned to students in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade poses only an Emergency 30-day substitute credential. OCHS leadership informed the OUSD that the teacher has completed all necessary prerequisites to enroll in a teacher certification program. OCHS was notified at the time of the visit that at a minimum, a Temporary County Certificate (TCC) would be necessary to meet certification requirements, pending enrollment by the staff member in an approved teacher credentialing program. OCHS leadership has contacted the OUSD credentials manager to assist in processing the TCC application with the Alameda County Office of Education.

## Part 4: Follow-up

### Future site visitations

1. OUSD staff will follow-up in future site visits to observe evidence of:
  1. Elective courses such as *Journalism, Poetry, Film and Fiction, and Contemporary Literature* as outlined in the approved charter
  2. *Foreign Language and Anthropology* courses as outlined in the approved charter
  3. *Afterschool-tutoring support* as outlined in the school's charter
2. OUSD staff will follow-up in future site visits to interview teachers regarding the development and effectiveness of "*Honors*" marked classes, and the *professional development associated with ELL strategies* as outlined in the approved charter.