

Oakland Unified School District Case Study Oakland International High School



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The School Redesign Network at Stanford University engages in research and development to support districts and schools that are equitable and enable all students to master the knowledge and skills needed for success in college, careers, and citizenship.

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Oakland Unified School District operates with the goals of universal college and workplace readiness, quality public schools in every neighborhood, clean and safe learning environments, service excellence across the district, and equitable outcomes for all students.

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Photo: Courtesy Oakland Unified School District

Introduction

The case of Oakland International High School (OIHS) provides a useful lens through which to examine the successes and challenges facing new small schools in Oakland. It provides insight into the ways in which, through flexibility on both sides of the district-school relationship, an established educational model can be successfully implemented within existing district structures. English language learners (ELLs) in the U.S. are a typically at-risk and underserved population who bring with them a diversity of challenges and assets. While there are many different approaches to ELL instruction, the Internationals Network for Public Schools (Internationals) is an important model that originated in New York City and has shown itself to be both successful and adaptable.

This case study explores the successes and challenges in opening a new International High School in Oakland based upon the Internationals model. Through looking at OIHS's student population, evidence of success, school history, key design features,

and the intersection between the school reality and district policies, this case study investigates the ways in which OIHS has been supported as a school and as an effective model for working with newcomer ELLs at the high school level.



Photo: Julie Kessler, School Redesign Network

Section One: OIHS Development Story

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Oakland International High School is a new small school in Oakland that first opened its doors in August of 2007. Oakland International's student population is made up entirely of recent immigrants who have been living in the U.S. for fewer than 4 years and scored a "1" or "2" on the California English Language Development Test.¹ The school has just completed its first year with 100 mostly ninth grade students. Next year, and each year after that, OIHS will take on another 100 ninth graders until it is a full 9-12 high school serving about 400 students.

OIHS students come from all over the world. They come from 22 different countries and speak more than two dozen languages. The student population is roughly 50% Latino, 30% Asian, 10% African, and 10% other ethnicities. Twenty percent of

the students are refugees from their home countries. The typical student entering OIHS has been in the country for about 6 months, speaks a small amount of English, lives in other areas of Oakland, and has been separated from one or both parents

for at least a year; 90% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Many of the students have interrupted formal education and have missed several years of schooling.

Evidence of Success

Despite the school's newness, it is already showing signs of being a successful environment for student learning. Examples of this success can be seen in students' development over the course of the first year. Because OIHS serves such a significant concentration of refugees from countries such as Burma, as well as students who may have been in transit for some time from far corners of the world or who may have spent time in refugee camps, many of the students have missed several years of schooling before enrolling. Consequently, many of the students needed to be re-socialized into school behaviors at the beginning of the year.

One example of this is a student who was a serious discipline case at the beginning of the school year. He entered OIHS needing to repeat ninth grade because he had failed all of his classes at the large Oakland Technical High School the year before. He spoke very little English and was struggling academically. In the early months of school at OIHS, he got into several fights and was suspended. Over the course of the year, however, as teachers reached out to him, made home visits, worked to support his English and academic abilities, and capitalized on the things he could do well, he began to improve. The school came to realize that the student was living alone in the U.S. without any family, renting a room and working in a pizza parlor at night. In response, they were able to push for foster care and, through classes, advisory, and a

great deal of personal attention from the school staff, he is now solidly passing all of his courses and no longer gets into fights.²

This type of story is common among Oakland International's students who started the year in a fragile state academically, linguistically, socially, and economically. At the end of its first year, the school atmosphere is much more like a community. Walking through the courtyard, one can see murals being created together by students that read, "Respect each other," and show scenes from Asian, Latino, African, and European cultures. Sitting in the courtyard, one can see friendships bridging across racial and ethnic lines.

All of the goals that the staff set for curriculum and assessment were met over the course of the year. Before opening, the teachers had the time and support to do a great deal of strategic planning for their first year. Their summer preparation focused on curricular plans and the portfolio review assessment that they wanted to do at the end of the year.

The school had a student attendance rate of more than 90%, particularly remarkable because students travel from all parts of Oakland to this North Oakland campus and retained its entire staff. From the school's first year to its second in 2008-09, it did lose some students. Four students dropped out, and several others moved back to their home countries or out of Oakland. The majority of them stayed, however, and returned to OIHS for the second year.

The level of students' English development is also impressive. While it is too early to have reliable results from the English language assessments, the language progress

among students is easy to hear. Even the most untrained ear is able to notice the significant language growth of OIHS students during school visits in September of 2007 and then again in June of 2008.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONALS MODEL

OIHS is the newest in a series of schools nationwide that are part of the Internationals Network for Public Schools, a nonprofit organization that helps establish public schools serving recent immigrant ELLs at the high school level. In addition to the most recent Oakland initiative, Internationals also supports a growing number of public high schools in New York City.

What is today the Internationals Network for Public Schools, a nationwide coalition of 11 schools, was not always as large. More than 20 years ago, in 1985, the first International High School opened with 60 students in the basement of LaGuardia Community College in New York City's borough of Queens. The school was begun in response to the needs of another small high school on the community college campus, Middle College, which was designed to serve students who were at high risk of dropping out. Middle College found itself with large numbers of recently arrived immigrant students with English needs. In response, International High School developed an educational approach that included longer classes, heterogeneous groupings of students, teams of teachers, interdisciplinary work, peer review for teachers, and a performance-based assessment system for the students. As its reputation grew and the need for schools like this increased, the Internationals Network continued to launch new schools in New York City and more recently, California. There are now 11 schools in the network, 10 in New

York City, and 1 in Oakland. In 2008, the Internationals Network was planning on opening two more California schools in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

In 2004, when there were still only four schools in the network, a group of leaders from among the schools came together under the support of the Gates Foundation to form a nonprofit organization charged with overseeing and supporting the schools. The creation of this nonprofit transformed the schools from the International Partnership Schools, as they were formerly known, to becoming the Internationals Network for Public Schools. More than just a name change, what was truly important about this shift was that the creation of the network brought the schools together under one umbrella of support. The individual schools have a great deal of autonomy and the network office is not a regulatory body, but rather a support system that provides essential services to the schools in the form of professional development, mentorship, and research.

To contextualize the Internationals in the larger arena of ELL education in the U.S., it is helpful to note how the Internationals' model differs from many other models of ELL education. The Internationals are entire schools dedicated to serving immigrant students needs, not programs or classes within existing schools. While certainly there are other schools serving recent immigrant populations, the Internationals differ from most other types of "newcomer" schools in that they are full 4-year high schools, not schools serving students for a transitional 1- or 2-year period. It is important to note that the Internationals are not private or charter schools, and that they operate within the same budgeting framework as other public schools in their districts.

Among its successes, the Internationals model catapults the number of ELLs staying in school, graduating from high school, and attending and completing college. Internationals develops and facilitates a network of schools with ELL populations and provides opportunities for teachers to learn the Internationals model. In a study of the first three schools that Internationals opened in New York City, the International high schools had a 4-year graduation rate of 63.4%, while New York City students classified as ELLs had a 30.3% 4-year

graduation rate. At the 7-year mark, Internationals schools graduate 88.7% percent of their students, compared to New York City's average of 49.6%.³ Although Oakland and New York are very different, and OIHS has just completed its first year, it is showing every indication of following the lead of its New York counterparts. OIHS has a similar student population in terms of ethnic diversity and socioeconomic status and is using the same instructional model that has been pioneered by the New York schools.



Photos: Liza Richheimer, courtesy of OIHS

Section Two: The Design of OIHS

HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

The idea for opening a new International High School in Oakland began in 2005. The Internationals was looking to expand to other cities outside of New York, and Oakland was high on its list. The network was looking for cities that had diverse immigrant populations and relatively high poverty rates, and which were located in states that allowed undocumented immigrants to attend public universities. Oakland had the added benefit that it already had a history of small school reform, a new small schools policy, and an incubation process for new schools.

Meetings began between the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), Internationals, and the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) to talk about ideas for how it might become a reality. Because the Internationals had a strong record of success in starting new small schools in New York, the model offered a proven incubation process and well-established experi-

ence. Consequently, the organization was granted the flexibility to use those OUSD resources that it found helpful, without being forced to use those that it felt it did not need.

The Internationals Network already had an incubation process for its new schools and was allowed to forego the OUSD incuba-

tion process for new small schools. It was, however, still given a portion of the district new schools funding dedicated to support a planning year before the school opened.

Internationals received significant support from the district in the initial stages of the school. The district partnered with Internationals Director of California Development Liliana Vargas, who says:

I was working with the district. The district supported me. They provided translations for all of our pamphlets; they helped me approach different organizations in Oakland that they had connections with, different immigrant organizations. The district also set up meetings with parents in middle schools to see if those parents would be interested in an International school.

In the early months of the 2006-07 school year, the school was approved, and a principal was found. In December 2006, the new principal, Carmelita Reyes, was approved as the founding principal of OIHS. Reyes had been a founding teacher at another new small Oakland school, Life Academy high school, and had experience with new small schools as well as with ELLs. She had also taught in New York City and was familiar with the Internationals model.

By the time Reyes was approved and the school was set to open, there were only 3 weeks until the district school Options

Fair (during which families enter a lottery process to choose a [high] school for their children), and the school still did not have a building facility. The school needed to be in a location where a diverse immigrant population would come. Because the Internationals' instructional model historically has utilized the linguistic and ethnic diversity of students, it was important that the school not be located in a neighborhood dominated by one language, such as the Fruitvale community, where most immigrant families speak Spanish. While there were several possible school sites, and deliberations were extensive, the old Carter Middle School in North Oakland was finally assigned as its permanent building.

The facility is a beautiful space and has many advantages. While it is not in an immigrant neighborhood and most of its students must travel long distances by bus each day, it is located along many bus and train lines, is far from the immigrant gangs, and therefore offers a certain measure of security. Although there have been several fights between OIHS students and the students from the nearby Oakland Technical High School, these have mostly revolved around language miscommunications.

The school also had flexibility in hiring its teachers. While several of its teachers came from other California schools, OIHS also hired two teachers who had experience working in the New York Internationals as well.



Photo: Julie Kessler, School Redesign Network

Section Three: Organizational Supports

SCHOOL LEARNING CLIMATE

Another important aspect of OIHS' instructional program is personalization. Currently, because the school is so small, every teacher has a class with every student, which helps create a strong community atmosphere among students and faculty alike. The school has a team structure in which cohorts of students work with a team of teachers who collaborate on student learning. This also supports the home visits that teachers and administrators make to students' families and homes.

In addition to having classes that are smaller than the district average, the school also has an advisory program where students and teachers spend time on both academic work and personal issues. The advisory curriculum focuses on team building activities for the students, work skills to support their academic classes, and a twice-weekly silent reading time where students read books of their choosing and write reflections on what they have read. They have

also done work around the DREAM Act, legislation impacting undocumented immigrant students' ability to attend college for in-state tuition. One student says:

Teachers here, they are like, *nos ponemos mas atencion* (give us more attention). We can learn more. They give me more attention than the teachers in Mexico. The teachers pay more attention to the students,

they show how to learn, how to say the words in English. [In my school in Mexico] they say just do your work and that's it. They don't explain nothing. Here they explain and help you.

In addition to the advisory system that gets students talking about their lives and communities, the teachers here also design and create curriculum that reflects students' varying ability levels and cultural backgrounds. At the beginning of the year, a large segment of the OIHS curriculum focused on students' own lives and experiences. This greatly added to the students feeling that their teachers knew them. One interdisciplinary project, for example, allowed students to research and present on their native countries, giving students an opportunity to share something of themselves with their teachers and peers. They were asked to research the environment of their native countries and also studied biomes in their science class. They made alphabet books of their home countries in English, and also did a unit on the process of assimilation, its benefits, and its drawbacks. Projects such as these connect students' learning to their own lives and experiences and also allows teachers the opportunity to know the students better.

As the school grows, the faculty will separate into teams of four or five teachers that work with the same group of 100 students and stay with them for 2 years. In 2008-09, the 9th and 10th graders will be combined in mixed classes taught by a team of teachers using a 2-year curriculum. By "looping" in this way, teachers will have a greater understanding of individual students' needs and progress over time. Students will also benefit from having both newer and more experienced students in one classroom. It

will also foster the creation of a positive, academic, smaller learning community for the students.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

The instructional design of OIHS follows the educational model of the Internationals schools, but it is implemented with a smaller budget due to California's lower funding of its public schools. Instruction is based on project-based learning, where class time is spent with students engaged in working on collaborative group activities instead of teacher-led lectures. It also incorporates heterogeneous student groupings, both by language and proficiency levels. This heterogeneous grouping helps facilitate students' English language acquisition in their subject area and language classes.

There are no strictly English as a Second Language classes at OIHS, even though the entire student body is made up of ELLs. Instead, language development is integrated into every aspect of the program. The math and science teachers, for example, know that beyond teaching math and science, they are also always teaching language. The school instructional design's focus on collaborative work, projects, and presentations intentionally pushes students into classroom situations where they must communicate with one another. The longer class periods and common teacher collaboration time also support this instructional style.

In such a heterogeneous environment, students are encouraged to speak in the common language: English. While there are times when linguistically homogenous groupings are used as part of a project, a great asset of the school is the linguistic heterogeneity that it has and the opportuni-

ties that diversity provides for students to simultaneously develop their language skills and content proficiency.

As a result, OIHS teachers deliberately design their curriculum to capitalize on this linguistic diversity asset. When starting a new project or unit, teachers form groups where students will be best supported and pushed. Students with less English proficiency may be paired with someone in their group who speaks the same language so that they can receive help with native language translation if needed, while students with more English proficiency may be put in groups with students from other language groups who need their English help. Teachers at OIHS spend a lot of time grouping and regrouping students in many different ways, for a variety of activities.

One teacher uses grouping:

So that students can help each other and so that there is always someone at the table who understands what the instructions are. Someone who understands what it is that we need to be doing during this particular activity or this particular project. Then everything is not totally teacher-instructed or teacher-focused, but it is a student-centered environment that students are getting help from each other and everyone has something that they can offer to the activity for the day.

The teachers at OIHS also collaborate on creating common practices across the school — practices such as having a “Word Wall” posted in each room, and sharing curriculum among teachers ensure that students are hearing the same message in all of their classes. All of the teachers use the same report card grading system, including

group work, growth in English, mastery of content, and class work and homework. Teachers grade their baseline student assessments together at the beginning of the year to gain a common sense of grading practices. The teachers meet each week to talk about students and share curriculum. For every other weekly meeting, teachers rotate turns sharing a project that they are working on to get feedback on how they might improve it and how to add better scaffolding for struggling students. The other weekly meetings focus on case management and the discussion of individual students’ issues and needs. As a school serving an entirely ELL population, the staff also collaborates to make sure the strategies that they are using to develop language are consistent across disciplines. One teacher says:

The whole school is all ELL’s, so the kids aren’t isolated from the rest of the student population, they *are* the student population. So they get support everywhere, not just from one teacher.

As multi-year grade level teams multiply over time with the growth of the school, teachers will meet both with their instructional team, as well as in discipline groups where science teachers or history teachers, for example, can meet together to plan curriculum.

OIHS offers its students a great deal of additional academic support. Students from the University of California, Berkeley, provide after-school tutoring and homework help 4 days a week. The school also provides a literacy program during the school day designed for students who have limited literacy skills in either English or their native language and who need direct instruction in reading and

writing skills. This daily class takes students temporarily out of their PE class and provides them with focused work on skills such as learning the English alphabet, sounding out words, and using correct sentence structure. Through a grant that Reyes wrote, the school also receives refugee tutoring from Refugee Transitions, a service that is going to be greatly expanded next year so that it is available to all students, both in-school as well as at their homes. OIHS provides English support classes for the Chinese-speaking students, taught by a bilingual teacher at the school in response to student request. Additionally, the school offers English as a Second Language classes to parents and family members, a service paid for and run by OUSD, but housed at OIHS. While not directly a student service, this has a beneficial impact on the students and school community by building parent skills as well as bringing families to the school.

The Internationals educational model relies on alternative forms of assessment that are appropriate for ELLs. OIHS has been given the autonomy to use the assessment systems that teachers find useful and have been granted a waiver from using the standard OUSD benchmark assessments in favor of using the math, literacy, and English writing assessments developed by Internationals. In its first year, OIHS used the English Formative Assessment and the Scholastic Reading Assessment for its language assessments. For math, the OIHS' math teacher created a benchmark assessment that uses no English in order to authentically test students' math abilities, from basic arithmetic to the beginning of algebra, rather than requiring English proficiency to read the math problems.

In addition to the above-mentioned assessments, the largest portion of the school's assessment program in its first year was the portfolio review process that all students completed at the end of the year. Each student's portfolio makes up 20% of his or her grade. The students select sample projects from each class that show their best work and growth. They are asked to write a reflection about their growth as a learner, as an English-speaker, and as a student and community member. The students then orally present their reflections and two of their projects to a panel of students and teachers. All of the Internationals schools use a similar portfolio review process. OIHS teachers found it so successful that they have decided to complete the process twice a year from now on. The teachers stated that the level of seriousness with which the students approached their presentations and the opportunity for reflection on their academic identities helped to build the culture of the school and push students to see themselves as English-speakers.

In addition to the assessments that OIHS staff have selected and created, the students are required to take the state standardized exams such as the California English Language Development Tests, the California High School Exit Exam and the California Standards Tests. However, the tests' English-only administration proves extremely difficult for the students. Regardless of how good at math or at history a student may be, he or she may still end up feeling like a failure because of the language barrier. Vargas, director of Internationals California, says:

As indicated, when we put our kids through the CST, we've certainly thought about scheduling that differ-

ently, but probably the lowest point of the school was when the kids had to endure that.

The school wanted to give students time to gain as much English as possible before taking the tests and so completed all the tests in one week near the end of the school year. In the future, the school will split up the exams over a longer period of time and start them earlier so as to diffuse the impact of the testing on the school atmosphere.

PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

A large measure of the success of OIHS can be attributed to the leadership of its principal, Carmelita Reyes. Reyes is a former teacher of 8 years who has won the Oakland Unified Teacher of the Year Award as well as the Marcus Foster Education Fund's Oakland Educator of the Year Award. She was also a founding teacher at Life Academy high school, one of the first new small schools in Oakland that opened in 2001. She came with a great deal of strength as an instructional leader, and was familiar with both the Internationals model and the Oakland school system. Many of the people with whom she worked over the years now work in OUSD's central office, and so she has a large network of personal contacts and support from within the district. Her knowledge of OUSD and connections to the people within it have helped OIHS thrive in many ways. Because Reyes was known and trusted by the people with whom she worked in the district, they were eager to go out of their way to help support her.

Reyes also spent 3 months in New York doing an internship with Internationals. Part of the incubation process for the school included an internship for her in an exist-

ing International High School, working with an experienced Internationals principal, and the opportunity to visit and speak with the principals of virtually all existing International High Schools. This internship was highly beneficial for her as a first-year principal and was something that OUSD supported by paying her salary there as well as paying for a replacement for her job in Oakland while she was in training. During the planning year for OIHS, Reyes was able to devote much of her time and energy to her role as instructional leader. She planned the summer retreat for the teachers, professional development workshops, and the protocols that the teachers would use during their weekly meetings. Once the school year started, however, the amount of paperwork and administrative tasks that she dealt with every day took over the time she had allotted to work as an instructional leader. Of her time commitments, Reyes says:

Teacher-overtime paperwork, WASC [Western Association of Schools & Colleges] accreditation, U.C. course approval, School Site Council minutes that have to be turned in to the compliance people downtown, the budget that has to be turned in just so.... You turn it in and then three weeks later someone wants a slightly different version of the same thing, and so you're doing it again.⁴ Compliance paperwork is eating up my time. I spend every Saturday here doing budget and reimbursing people and ordering. This is not instructional leadership.

As a new school principal with a small support staff, she must take care of all of these things herself. It has meant that she has been able to spend much less time than

she would like in classrooms and working one-on-one with teachers on their curriculum and instruction. Next year, financed through support from the Internationals fundraising, the school will hire a part-time instructional coach to work with teachers as well as allot some of the time that the OIHS Special Programs Coordinator and Internationals California Director of Development spend at the school to coaching for teachers as well.

Also requiring a lot of time is Reyes' dedication to writing grants for the school. Many of the programs and projects that OIHS has been able to offer its students have come from grants that Reyes has written and received to supplement the funding available to her school. She has received, with the help of Internationals, ten separate grants that provide much needed services, supplies, and after-school programs.

Another important part of the leadership of OIHS is the leadership provided by Internationals. Vargas, the California Director of Development for Internationals, was instrumental in bringing about the opening of the school, but also has supported it in its first year. Vargas acts as a mentor to Reyes and helps with professional development and other school issues. Because OIHS is the first school outside of New York that Internationals has opened, the organization provides a great deal of support to the school, helping it to thrive and exploring ways to make the Internationals model more successful in Oakland's unique educational climate. Internationals hopes to open two more California schools over the next 2 years and, consequently, is using the lessons learned at OIHS to help adapt the Internationals model to the West Coast's unique needs. The Internationals Executive Director Claire Sylvan says:

The model is clear, but the context was going to be totally different. So we have regarded and continue to regard our work in Oakland as a learning experience and as a laboratory to figure out, for a model that is as strongly collaboratively based and network-based, how to take it and create in a place where there isn't the level of infrastructure that there is in New York. We really do learn.... It's not only about OIHS and how the district works, but it's been what have we learned.

Unlike the New York schools, OIHS has not been able to share resources and professional development in the same deep and organic way, collaborate across schools on curriculum issues, or receive support from schools that have dealt with the same issues. While there has been a lot of support from the network, the distance from the other International high schools does not allow for the kind of collaboration that the New York schools enjoy. This will change for the better when San Francisco International High School opens in the future.

A large part of the Internationals educational model focuses on teacher collaboration and professional development. As a first-year school, the teaching staff of OIHS consists of only six people. Including the principal, Special Programs Coordinator, and secretary, the entire school staff is an army of only nine. This puts significant pressure on teachers' preparation (prep) time, as they must also supervise lunch shifts, complete after-school tutoring, and provide other support duties. Despite the many roles that each teacher must fill, many students remark on how accessible the teachers are and how much attention they give to each student. One structure

that eases this pressure is that each teacher only has one course to teach and prepare.

In addition to the two-and-a-half hour Wednesday teacher meetings, the school also offers other opportunities for collaboration and professional development. The school schedule is arranged so that teachers from complimentary disciplines (math and science, English and history) have common planning times. OIHS is trying to encourage teachers to work on interdisciplinary projects with students to draw connections across subject areas. One such project was done on the effects of smoking. In science class the students were researching and doing laboratory experiments on the physical effects of nicotine, while in math class, they were doing a unit on graphing and statistics about smoking in the U.S. and worldwide.

OIHS' teachers have the autonomy that they need to be able to conduct professional development as they wish. They are not required to attend district-wide professional development during their in-service days, allowing them to develop their own workshops and set their own goals. This has made a huge difference in the quality and relevance of their professional development. The school uses protocols in its staff meetings that staff have developed to aid teachers in sharing curriculum in helpful and positive ways. The teachers went on three planning and reflection retreats this year to further discuss their work. One retreat provided professional development around the Internationals educational model, such as using project-based learning and collaborative group work in class. Another retreat was dedicated to sharing and giving feedback on curriculum units. The last retreat was a time for reflection and evaluation of the school's first year and goal-setting

for the next year. Internationals has provided several professional development workshops focused on supporting English language development and designing instruction for heterogeneous groups. Reyes also sent her teachers to New York for several days to observe and collaborate with the more established International High Schools there. This was funded through an Internationals Gates Foundation grant as well as through a BayCES and OUSD professional development grant.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

There has been a great deal of collaboration with parents and the surrounding community as well. OIHS' Temescal neighborhood location provides the school with large numbers of local elementary school parents, former teachers, retired librarians, and community members who often come to the school to volunteer. Early on, Reyes began reaching out to the surrounding community and the school has been well supported by neighborhood residents, from the volunteer librarian who has stocked the entire library to the UC Berkeley students who come to tutor each afternoon.

Reyes and Internationals wrote and received a grant from the Zellerbach Foundation to send two teachers to the Parent Leadership Action Network workshops, which provide tools for establishing a parent organization dedicated to parental empowerment and school improvement. OIHS now has parents come to school to discuss school issues and learn about the American educational system and Oakland Unified School District, in particular. Of the parent leadership group Reyes says:

One of their priorities was changing the food in the cafeteria. It is hor-

rible and their concern actually got the attention of the WASC accreditation committee, which got the attention of the Strategy Group at the school district, which got the attention of the head of food services⁵. So next year we are going to have a salad bar and hot soup every day, and they're actually going to cook here instead of having plastic wrap, prefab food. So that is a small victory that just got played out last week.

Aside from the parents who participate in the school's parent organization, many OIHS families are highly involved in the school community. For their parent-teacher conferences, OIHS had 100% attendance from the families of their students. While some students may have come with cousins or guardians if their parents were not in the U.S, adult turnout for conferences was high. At exhibition nights showcasing student work in the fall and spring, about 70% of the families came. Additionally, because Reyes has made home visits a priority for her teachers, nearly a third of families has been visited by one of their student's teachers. These connections between students' families, communities, and the school make OIHS stronger in supporting its students. Through communication with families on the students' academic and social issues, the students receive more support, both from the school and in their homes.

DISTRICT POLICIES AND STRUCTURES THAT SUPPORT AND LIMIT SCHOOL SUCCESS

Overall, the staff at Oakland International, as well as Internationals, feel that the school has been well supported by OUSD

policies, noting satisfaction in OUSD's understanding of new small schools' needs and differences. Reyes found the immense amount of coaching she received in her first year very helpful to her success. In all, she was offered mentoring from the Internationals, the OUSD's new principals coach, the new schools coach, and the district's school operations coach. Feeling adequately supported, she convinced OUSD that she did not need the new schools coach and was able to receive money for the school instead. Similar instances of OUSD flexibility strengthening Reyes' ability to be an effective leader are sprinkled throughout the story of OIHS' first year. Of the district's support, Reyes says:

I have a remarkable lineup of people that I worked with previously who all have strategic jobs in OUSD now. All these people who knew me, how I worked, what I was doing philosophically, how I approached things, were all of a sudden in a position to support me. Another reason I received tremendous support is that a bunch of administrative people in the OUSD had previously seen the International schools because of the relationship with BayCES and [Stanford] School Redesign Network ... and so they had this level of confidence in the design of our school.

These district people, including her Network Executive Officer (NExO), were able to advocate for Reyes becoming the principal of OIHS and support her once she became principal. The school's autonomy further strengthens the collaboration between OUSD and the established Internationals model—namely, its freedom to conduct professional development as it wants, to use assessments that are applicable to its stu-

dents, and to hire teachers who are right for the school—which helps to make the school successful.

Some of the obstacles that the school has come up against this year are problems that Reyes believes are common to all other Oakland principals:

We do our bit to turn in paperwork for stipends for teachers and 4 months later they get the checks. Who is going to want to do extra work if it takes that long? Contractors aren't getting paid and so they don't want to work in OUSD. It was taking months for their fingerprints to clear so they could start the work. Based on what other principals were telling me, I didn't even hire contractors to do a lot of things that I would have done.

At one point in the year, after Reyes had completed the search and interview process to hire new teachers for 2008-09, a hiring freeze was put in effect and she lost all of the teachers that she had found to other districts. And currently, a teacher who was placed at her school due to consolidations of teaching positions at other schools 2 months earlier had yet to sign his contract, an inaction that prohibited her from hiring another teacher. While the school was given autonomy in teacher hiring for its first year, that freedom is not guaranteed in future years. In order for the school to continue serving its students well, it needs to be able to hire teachers in a timely fashion who offer the skill and disposition for educating this unique ELL population. The school needs teachers who are able to

teach course content to ELLs while supporting their English-language development at the same time. Additionally, teachers need to be able to teach diverse classes of heterogeneously grouped students in one environment. OIHS' students come with hugely varying levels of academic and English proficiency. Teachers at OIHS need to be able to structure their classes around scaffolded collaboration to support all students in one classroom. Reyes needs the flexibility to hire the teachers who are the best fit.

The standardized tests that their students must take are also a problem for the school. While it is trying to find ways to schedule the exams so that there is less of a negative impact on student morale, taking the CST this year dealt a huge blow to the school's feeling of progress and growth.

Financial resources continue to be an issue for the school, since it takes more resources to provide instruction for heterogeneous groups, culturally relevant resources, and applicable professional development necessary for the success of OIHS' unique student population. OIHS operates at roughly one third of the budget of any of the other International schools. Adapting a model on such a financially restricted scale has proved challenging, but possible, through creativity, according to Reyes.

The case of OIHS is a useful example in examining the successes and challenges facing new small schools in Oakland. It provides insight into the ways in which, through flexibility from both the school and the district, an established educational model can be successfully implemented

within existing district structures. While still a very new school, OIHS is growing as a new face of the Internationals model as well as a new resource for immigrant youth

in the Oakland community. While certainly only one model of how to serve ELLs, the lessons of OIHS's growth will be important for any district serving ELLs in the U.S.



Photo: Julie Kessler, School Redesign Network

Endnotes

1. “Three purposes for the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) are specified in state law (see Education Code Section 60810 (d)(1-3)), including: 1) identify pupils as limited English proficient, 2) determine the level of English language proficiency (ELP) who are limited English proficient, and 3) assess the progress of limited English proficient students in acquiring the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English.” Overall scores range from Advanced (5), Early Advanced (4), Intermediate (3), Early Intermediate (2), and Beginning (1) <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/celdtfaq.asp>
2. Advisory at OIHS is a short period that meets every day with a small group of students and one adult that focusing on building academic skills, developing community at the school, and providing an opportunity for students to develop a closer relationship with one of their teachers, who maintains communication with them and their families and acts as an advocate for their advisees.
3. Fine, M., Stoudt, B., & Futch, V. (2005). The Internationals Network for Public Schools: A quantitative and qualitative cohort analysis of graduation and dropout rates. *Teaching and learning in a transcultural academic environment*. New York: The Graduate Center, CUNY.
4. The University of California high school course requirements are known as the A-Gs. They are a list of 15, year-long course requirements that each California state high school student must pass in order to be eligible to attend a UC school. For OIHS, making its slightly different course offerings fit the A-G course list requires time and must be approved by the UC system.
5. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is one of six regional accrediting associations in the United States. Its mission is “to foster excellence in elementary, secondary, adult, and postsecondary education by encouraging school improvement through a process of continuing evaluation and to recognize, by accreditation, schools that meet an acceptable level of quality, in accordance with established criteria.” http://www.acswasc.org/about_overview.htm

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