Libby Schaaf's plan for quality education for all Oakland students

"The best way to fight crime is to address the root causes — particularly through crime prevention and education. I will use my experience of mentoring at-risk youth and building education coalitions to improve Oakland public schools."
— Libby Schaaf

What I Think

While the mayor need not, nor does she directly control Oakland public schools, the crisis of the lack of opportunity for so many of our children and youth requires strong mayoral leadership that fully leverages the convening power of the office and resources of the city.

Oakland has tremendous potential to and must become a student-outcomes oriented center for excellence, equity, and innovation in education. I am a proud graduate of Oakland public schools and my children attend the same elementary school I attended growing up. I believe in our public schools and I am prepared to help make them the best in the world.

The benefits are clear — with more students graduating from high school and going on to some type of postsecondary experience, our community would see increases in net earnings, spending, home sales, jobs, and tax revenue.[1]

Cradle to career — from early learning outcomes to college readiness — outcomes for Oakland children and youth are simply not acceptable. Today, 77 percent white, 27 percent of African-American, 23 percent of Latino third graders are reading at grade level.[2] That level of disparity is shameful. As Mayor, I will improve disparities for students of color and demand that we do something about them.

Even with 11 million Americans unemployed, about 4 million jobs remain unfilled, many in fields such as information technology, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing. Many of those jobs are here in Oakland and the East Bay.[3]

Rapid changes in the skills required for participation in the 21st century economy, and our city's urgent need to address persistent opportunity gaps for our children of color, demand that we commit ourselves to a fundamental transformation of public education in our city — and the relationship of city agencies to our public schools and children and youth.

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1 Alliance for Excellent Education. The Economic Benefits of Helping High School Dropouts Earn Both High School Diplomas and College Degrees. March 2012. http://www.all4ed.org

2 Oakland Reads 2020 Baseline Report, 2013, page 1; http://www.oaklandreads.org/baselinereport

3 http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/01/closing-the-skills-gap-101478.html#.VCjkoCtdVOU

As Mayor, I will work with the school district, the county, the broader educational community, labor, and other civic leaders to ensure students have access to the teaching, schools, programs, and services that will educate them to fully participate in life and work in the 21st century community and economy.

In 2012-13, 126 district and public charter schools served 48,594 Oakland students.[4]

As Mayor, I will be more concerned about whether a school or program is high quality and accessible to our highest need children, than about who governs or manages it — school district or public charter school, city or school district early childhood program, nonprofit organization or government agency. My focus will be on quality and collaboration, growing what works, and equity across our schools.

The City of Oakland has tremendous resources to support education and schools. As Mayor, I intend to leverage all of our city's capacity and resources in service of our students and youth.

What I Have Done

My vision for Oakland public education is rooted in my decades of engagement and experience with students and schools. My commitment is to ensure my own and every single one of Oakland's children have the academic and social-emotional supports they need.

My experiences mentoring at-risk youth, collaborating with OUSD leadership, and building education nonprofits to improve education, combined with my understanding of public agencies and programs, uniquely positions me to catalyze change and improvement in Oakland public schools.

Education and schools have long been my personal passion and I am committed to leveraging my lifelong involvement and leadership on behalf of public schools as Mayor.

My experiences include the following highlights:

Volunteers in public schools: In 1995, I started a centralized volunteer program for the Oakland Unified School District at the Marcus Foster Educational Institute that placed thousands of volunteers in Oakland public school classrooms throughout the city and organized. It also organized the Parenting University, a citywide Peer Tutoring Initiative and the largest NetDay in the country – wiring 52 schools for internet access in a single day.

Lighthouse Community School: I helped start the award-winning Lighthouse Community Public Charter School in East Oakland — recognized as the best public charter school in California last year. Today, 95% of Lighthouse graduates are accepted to a four-year college — 90% of them are the first in their families to attend college.

Leading quality education organizations: I've served on the boards of the Oakland Schools Foundation (now the Oakland Education Fund), Chabot Space and Science Center and Museum of Children's Art (Mocha), and on the advisory boards of East Bay Agency for Children, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Oakland, and Vincent Academy Public Charter School in West Oakland. I represent the City Council on the Youth Ventures Joint Powers Authority.

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[4] Oakland Achieves 2014, page 3.

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Mentored at-risk youth: For more than 20 years, I've been mentoring at-risk youth and young interns from Oakland public schools through programs including Met West High School, Ignite, Boys and Girls Club, Rotary Hope Mentoring Program and the Center for Youth Development through Law. I've has served as field faculty for the Coro fellowship for ethical leadership in public affairs, training their young participants for 15 years and counting.

What I Will Do

"Do not confine your children to your own learning, for they were born in another time."
— Rabindranath Tagore

Schools alone cannot transform outcomes for our children. These issues are bigger than any one institution or leader. Addressing them requires a permanent, deep institutionalized commitment, relationship, and partnership among city, school district, and county agencies. The structures that support alignment and collaboration must have the capacity to outlast any politician. That is why I would not convene my own Mayor's Education Cabinet, as other Mayors have done, because I want this collaboration to outlast my tenure and have broader and deeper ownership.

By the end of my first year in office, I will work through the Youth Ventures Joint Powers Authority (Youth Ventures JPA) created by the city, school district, and county agencies to establish clear, shared outcome goals for Oakland children and youth. This initiative will embrace and build on the Oakland Reads 2020 third grade reading goal to establish targets along a cradle to career continuum — from the readiness of our preschoolers for kindergarten to the preparation of our high school graduates for college and the 21st century workplace.

The opportunities afforded to Oakland's young people are everyone's responsibility. As Mayor, I will work to remove silos between city agencies and schools. Effective partnerships should be the norm and not the exception. We will do everything the City can do on its own and follow through on opportunities to partner with other agencies and organizations in pursuit of shared goals.

Whatever data we have that can help, we will share — adhering to and complying, of course, with all laws and requirements to protect privacy. There is extraordinary untapped promise in the creation of data-sharing among agencies to better understand the impact of our programs and services for citizens. Data gets better with sunshine. I'm committed to helping Oakland's Youth Ventures JPA apply for and win a Code for America Fellowship to bring technology skills to help us open, integrate and learn more from our data.

My team and I are committed to opportunity and success for each and every Oakland child. Wherever we live, wherever we go to school, whatever our background, Oakland must provide diverse, quality educational opportunities for all our children and families. I expect and will demand excellence from every civil servant and educator in our town.

Within my first 100 days, I will appoint a cabinet-level leader and liaison for Education and Families to lead and coordinate my education priorities and initiatives. This leader will publish an annual work plan for 1) coordinating the work of city agencies to implement my education priorities, and 2) partnering with other agencies and organizations to support students and public schools.

Quality education for all Oakland students

The following are my priorities to ensure quality education for all Oakland students:

Priority #1: Expand access to high-quality early education for all children and combat early truancy

Priority #2: Expand student access to personalized learning and technology

Priority #3: Strengthen and expand pathways to college and career

Priority #4: Develop restorative practices for youth across city agencies

Priority #5: Make Oakland Teacher Town, USA

What I Think

Priority #1: Expand Access to High-Quality Early Education for All Children and Combat Early Truancy

"Kindergarteners who enter school with early learning experiences that provide them with grade level developmental, social, and academic skills are much more likely to become successful readers and life-long learners. From birth to age five, children develop language and thinking skills at a pace that is greater than any other time of life and are strongly impacted by interactions with those around them and by interactive experiences. As a result, the quality of early care and education that children receive has a powerful influence on their future academic success." [5]

In 2013, First 5 Alameda County found that only 40 percent of OUSD kindergarteners had developed the academic, physical, and social skills to be ready for school. The 2014 Oakland Achieves report finds that we have 10,734 low income children ages 3-5 in our city and only provide 4,398 free or subsidized pre-school seats.[6] How do we create more quality spots and help families to access them? How do we ensure that every one of our children gets a strong start on developing the habits and skills for a healthy, productive life?

In 2014, Oakland Achieves released a report showing that Oakland's kindergarteners had the highest rate of chronic absence – missing more than 10% of the school year. Chronically absent kindergarteners and 1st graders stood only a 17% chance of having proficient reading and math skills by third grade.

ACTION STEPS

1. Within my first year, we will convene leaders of relevant city, county, and school district agencies, and community-based organizations for a first annual "Early Oakland" summit to align actions to ensure that all subsidized slots are filled in the city, that quality in those classrooms continues to improve, and that we add more access to high quality care as new funding opportunities emerge.

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[5] Oakland Achieves: A Public Education Progress Report, 2014, page 10; http://oaklandachieves.org/

[6] Oakland Achieves 2014, page 10.

2. Connect parents to high quality pre-K programs by investing in information hubs such as www.Early Oakland.org, the new web-based city directory of educational programs and data.

3. **Positive attendance:** Promote citywide "Every Day Counts" campaign within city programs and departments to develop early understanding of positive attendance practices among families. Students who are chronically absent are less than half as likely to score proficient or advanced on the state reading and mathematics assessments than other students.[7]

4. **Partner with OUSD:** We will support OUSD's efforts to expand access to quality pre-K and explore opportunities to co-locate preschools at the remaining OUSD and charter elementary schools that don't currently serve pre-K.

5. **Expand Headstart:** As the largest pre-K provider in the city, we apply for and maximize all federal and state subsidies for children birth to age 5.

6. **Maximize CalWorks:** Hire more case managers to ensure families who qualify receive and use childcare support at quality pre-school providers.

7. **Improve program quality:** We can use City-managed Headstart training resources as a hub of professional development opportunities for early educators in programs across the city that do not receive resources for educator training and development.

8. **Shared data:** The Youth Ventures Joint Powers Authority (JPA) can support data-sharing among Headstart and OUSD Child Development Center programs to clarify impacts on school readiness and use and learn from common assessments across agencies and programs.

9. **Literacy-rich city:** We can infuse strategies for families to build oral language and preliteracy skills in all city services. As Mayor, I will maximize every city touch point with families – such as the daily contacts we have at the Oakland Housing Authority, Libraries, and Parks and Recreation programs to support literacy. We will invest in training for city staff on the latest research on child development and early learning so that we don't miss opportunities to talk to children and families about literacy development in tangible and concrete ways. The current Talk, Read, Sing campaign exemplifies this kind of approach.

Priority #2: Expand Student Access to Personalized Learning and Technology

The City of Oakland can play a critical role in supporting our public schools to develop more student-centered approaches to learning to help our children graduate prepared for life and work in the 21st century.

OUSD has made some progress. This fall, two new middle schools that emphasize personalized learning opened their doors in Oakland to their first students: Education for Change's EPIC and the East Bay Innovation Academy. Eight schools in Oakland have pioneered Blended Learning pedagogy, emphasizing small group instruction with teacher and access to high-quality adaptive online content. The school district is also training Instructional Technology Teacher Leaders, across all schools, who can support other teachers at their school sites. In August 2014, OUSD completed wifi upgrades at 44 schools using eRate funds. Wifi upgrades at remaining schools are scheduled to be completed in June 2015 using Measure J funds. Approximately one quarter of Oakland schools now have access to a Learning Management System, such as OUSD1 in the district, which can help teachers and students

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[7] Oakland Achieves: Attending School Every Day, Making Progress and Taking Action in Oakland Schools, 2014, page 2; http://oaklandachieves.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/oakachattendancefinal.pdf

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organize learning and access online learning tools. And last year, OUSD deployed ~10,000 Chromebooks to support the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards. But we need to dramatically increase access to technology and supports for educators to develop personalized, student-centered approaches and classrooms.

"Drawn from mind/brain sciences, learning theory, and research on youth development, student-centered approaches to learning challenge the current schooling and education paradigm:
- *Learning is personalized*
- *Learning is competency based*
- *Learning takes place anytime, anywhere*
- *Students exert ownership over their learning*

... Recent research and theory from the learning sciences shows that a personalized approach to competency education may help better prepare all students from all backgrounds for deeper learning and for life after graduation." [8]

ACTION STEPS

1. Negotiate municipal broadband franchise license competitively with Comcast and other Internet Service Providers, including better terms for low-income residents, and support municipal broadband as an alternative.
2. Engage and attract Google Fiber and other providers to increase competition, which will improve service and lower prices for residents and businesses.
3. Invest in public wifi at parks, museums, libraries, recreation centers, city buildings, and city busses, as well as hotspot check-out for residents from the library.
4. Deepen partnerships with and promote organizations like OTX West, which puts computers in low-income homes and trains parents, while simultaneously reducing landfill eWaste and hiring local community members.
5. Partner with OUSD to identify and coordinate resources to support the long term Instructional Technology Teacher Leader program in Oakland USD schools.
6. Engage education leaders and philanthropy to sustain and deepen the work of creating personalized learning schools in Oakland, building on the current Next Generation Learning Challenge grant opportunity.
7. Engage OUSD and philanthropy to dramatically increase access to computer science coursework in Oakland public schools in partnership with organizations such as TEALS (Technology Education And Literacy in Schools), Code.org, and UC Davis' C-STEM Center. Today, there are 7 teachers within OUSD teaching computer science courses.

Priority #3: Strengthen and Expand Pathways to College and Career

In the 2006 Civic Enterprises report, *The Silent Epidemic*, high school dropouts reported most frequently that their reason for leaving school was that classes were not interesting or relevant to the real-world.[9] Students who are able to gain experience and exposure to the world of work while in high school are better able to persist in college and are more prepared to pursue self-sustaining careers.[10]

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[8] Jobs for the Future, http://www.jff.org/initiatives/students-center

[9] The Silent Epidemic, Civic Enterprises, page iii; http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED513444.pdf

[10] Oakland Achieves 2014, page 34.

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A 2010 CEOs for Cities report, *The Talent Dividend*, found that each additional percentage point improvement in aggregate adult four-year college attainment is associated with a $856 increase in annual per capita income. If our Oakland-East Bay Region increased its college attainment rate from 38.6 percent to 39.6 percent, the region would capture a $1.9 billion Talent Dividend. That's 16,462 additional college graduates.[11]

Last year, 84 percent of students in OUSD's Career Pathways programs graduated from high school, compared to 53 percent of students most at risk of dropping out.[12] Oakland Achieves describes the four key elements of career pathways programs that support student success:

1. Rigorous Academic Core that includes college preparatory English, mathematics, science, history and world language courses for all students.
2. Real World Technical Skills through challenging career-based component of three or more courses to help students gain the knowledge and skills that can give them a head start on a successful career.
3. Work-Based Learning opportunities that begin with mentoring.
4. Personalized Support including counseling and supplemental instruction in reading, writing and mathematics that help students master academic and technical learning and job shadowing that evolve into intensive internships, school-based enterprises or virtual apprenticeships.[13]

We can turnaround our high school dropout crisis, send more of our children to college, and boost our local economy by building more innovative career pathways programs, and strengthening the connections among schools and businesses, government agencies, and community-based organizations.

ACTION STEPS

1. Support Measure N – College and Career Readiness for All to dramatically expand access to career pathways programs in Oakland's district and charter middle and high schools. This local measure will provide an additional $1,000 per student to our high schools for the next 10 years.
2. City Internships: By the end of my first year, we will support every city department, office, and/or team to host high school students for internships both during the school year and over the summer.
3. City Mentorships: Strengthen partnerships with organizations like Be A Mentor to help train and support city employees to provide mentorship for Oakland youth.
4. Engage our Chambers of Commerce and Inner City Advisors to support businesses to offer internships and partner with schools, and participate in career pathways.
5. Partner with philanthropy to help local education, civic, and business leaders learn from other cities that have developed robust partnerships and infrastructure to support students. We can develop new structures and practices to harness the capacity and good intentions of our community to make a more meaningful and measurable impact for our kids.

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[11] http://www.ceosforcities.org/city-dividends/talent/

[12] OUSD Website.

[13] Oakland Achieves 2014, page 34.

Priority #4: Develop Restorative Practices for Youth Across City Agencies

"Restorative Justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible"
— Howard Zehr

We must create a culture within city government that values each and every child and youth. Our current capacity to respond to the crisis-level outcomes for youth is unacceptable. There exists today deep mistrust among our citizens – particularly youth of color – with city government.

In March 2014, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights reported that "racial disparities in school discipline policies are not only well-documented among older students, but actually begin during preschool."[14] We must also acknowledge that bias in our education system bleeds into the bias of the criminal justice system.[15]

As city employees – from police officers to librarians – interact with Oakland children and youth every day, we can increase how many of those conversations are positive and focused on attending school, college and career. We need to train and develop city employees to align our practices with those used in our schools to develop youth capacity to resolve conflicts and strengthen relationships among children and adults.

ACTION STEPS

1. Training on Restorative Practices: Partner with education and community-based organizations, to train the city employees who serve children and families in restorative practices within my first two years.
2. Align City agencies (Police, Oakland Housing Authority, Libraries, Parks and Recreation, etc.) to support school district efforts to address chronic absence.
3. Collaborate with OUSD and County agencies through the Youth Ventures JPA to establish specific goals for positive attendance, decreases in truancy and drop out, and improved academic achievement for children in our foster care systems.
4. Support OUSD's African American Male Achievement Initiative and the implementation of restorative justice practices at schools and other youth serving programs to interrupt the school to prison pipeline.

Reform City Employee Evaluations: We will conduct a thorough review of city employee evaluations to add responsibility for changes to these outcomes for youth.

Priority #5: Make Oakland Teacher Town, USA

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[14] http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/expansive-survey-americas-public-schools-reveals-troubling-racial-disparities

[15] http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/14/opinion/charles-blow-michael-brown-and-black-men.html?_r=0

Quality education for all Oakland students

Research has consistently shown that of all in-school factors, teacher effectiveness matters most to student outcomes. Students taught by the top teachers are more likely to read at grade level, more likely to stay in school school, and more likely to enroll in college. Today, 70 percent of our teachers leave Oakland Unified within 5 years. Many leave Oakland public schools for higher pay in other districts. City and education leaders must collaborate and innovate to make Oakland into a "Teacher Town" – where great teachers come, stay and get the best results for our students. While the City of Oakland doesn't control how schools evaluate or train our teachers, as Mayor, I will support our schools with powerful tools to recruit and retain the best educators for our children.

ACTION STEPS

1. Challenge and support OUSD leaders to engage with the Oakland Education Association and prioritize existing resources to give our teachers a raise.
2. Create assistance and incentives for teacher housing, including looking to fund new affordable housing for teachers, as well as mortgage assistance for teachers buying a home in Oakland.
3. Work with school district, county, labor and charter leaders to explore a special release for Oakland school employees from local taxes to benefit schools.
4. Convene OUSD, charter school, labor, and higher education leaders to develop a shared agenda to strengthen the local pipeline of Oakland students returning to teach in our schools.
5. Work with local business and philanthropic leaders to create an Excellent Educator Hiring Bonus grant program to K-12 district and charter schools that agree to the highest standards in educator screening and hiring. Up to 25 new hires at eligible schools will receive up to a $4,000 signing bonus each year.

We, Oaklanders — our quality of life, our safety, our economy, and the future ahead for our children — are deeply interconnected across neighborhoods, backgrounds, and communities. That educational opportunity is so inequitably distributed across our city diminishes us all.

Quality education for all Oakland students