



Empower Oakland 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

Empower Oakland is a movement fueled by Oakland residents who recognize that “business as usual politics” will only further perpetuate Oakland’s downward spiral. We believe in empowering Oaklanders to amplify their collective voices for greater political impact and influence.

All submissions will be unedited for spelling, grammar, and format and published on empoweroakland.com to educate Oakland voters. Empower Oakland will also use candidate submissions to help inform their Candidate Endorsement process. Candidates may be asked to interview in-person with the Empower Oakland Endorsement Committee. Final endorsement decisions will be made by early September.

Please email the completed questionnaire as a .doc or .pdf document to info@empoweroakland.com. Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM.

Candidate Name: Dwayne Aikens Jr

Email: daikensjr4OUSDd3@gmail.com

Phone Number: 510-409-8275

Office & District Sought: School Board D3

Campaign Website: Work In Progress

Social Media Handles

- Twitter: [@delegancewelo](https://twitter.com/delegancewelo)
- Facebook: [\(3\) Facebook](#)
- Instagram: [@delegancewelo](https://www.instagram.com/delegancewelo)
- LinkedIn: [Dwayne Aikens Jr. | LinkedIn](#)
- TikTok: [@delegancewelo](https://www.tiktok.com/@delegancewelo)

Expected total Fundraising Amount: \$

Funds Raised To Date: \$6057

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland? I am an Oakland Native, attending OUSD public schools. I moved home in 2005 and have worked in education and youth development since then. I co-founded We Lead Ours youth development and enrichment nonprofit organization in 2010. Currently a member of Oakland Sugar Sweetened & Beverage Tax Advisory Commissioner former Chair, (2022) Oakland Parks & Recreation Foundation Board Member (2022), Bay Area Rapid Transit Advisory Commission for Title VI & Environmental Justice (2018). Formerly Keep Oakland Beautiful Board Member and Oakland Parks and Recreation Advisory Commissioner. I served as an adopt-a-spot leader for Arroyo Park and Brookdale Park. Through my nonprofit work I have provided free summer camp programs for youth of all ages, community weekend



mentor field trips, career exploration workshops, college mentoring, civic engagement workshops, and sports programming.

- a. City of Oakland Volunteer Appreciation Celebration Keynote Speaker (2015)
 - b. Golden State Warriors Walmart Community Playmaker Award Recipient (2018)
 - c. City of Oakland CA Inspirational Leadership Community Awardee (2020)
 - d. Oakland Martin Luther King Jr Multicultural Rally Speaker (2021)
 - e. Oakland Youth Civic Day Proclamation (2021)
 - f. Oakland Athletics Community Champion Award (2021)
2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?
- a. Out of school time youth development programs including a robust summer job training program.
 - b. Mental health including violence and drug prevention programs.
 - i. I think the bright spot is that we now have more Oakland Natives getting involved in leadership and working collaboratively together to raise awareness to the issues. Housing is being developed but many people can't afford to move in because of the cost of living and wages.
3. Why are you running for office and why are you uniquely qualified to fulfill the office you are running for at this time?
- a. I am running for office because I am a proud Oakland native graduate of OUSD public schools then attended an HBCU moved home after graduation due to Hurricane Katrina relocating me. I have dedicated my work to education, youth development and civic engagement. Helped raise 5 youth all OUSD students and seeing the constant lack of programming and funding for programs are disheartening. I am running for school board because I know our school district can do better in preparing our students to achieve college and career success after high school. As school board director, I will work towards interrupt high chronic absenteeism rates by ensuring we have the policies and practices that engage students and families and invest resources in accelerating students' academic achievement and college and career readiness.
4. Prior to running for office, how were you involved in local government, school board, and/or your community? What were your biggest accomplishments?
- a. Currently a member of Oakland Sugar Sweetened & Beverage Tax Advisory Commissioner former Chair, (2022) Oakland Parks & Recreation Foundation Board Member (2022), Bay Area Rapid Transit Advisory Commission for Title VI & Environmental Justice (2018). Formerly Keep Oakland Beautiful Board Member and Oakland Parks and Recreation Advisory Commissioner. I served as an adopt-a-spot leader for Arroyo Park and Brookdale Park. Biggest



accomplishment so far has been receiving Xavier University of Louisiana 40 Under 40 Young Alumni Award in 2014.

Oakland School Board

5. What are the highest priority challenges facing Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)?
 - a. Managing the budget after state receivership ends
 - b. Closing down and consolidating schools
 - c. Developing a plan on how public, charter and independent charter schools coexist while keeping the students and families needs centered.

6. What is your vision for OUSD in 10 years? What specific and measurable steps will you take to advance toward realizing that vision in the next 4 years?

I envision OUSD schools as community schools that serve as hubs for educational, life and wellbeing resource learning complexes. Here are some specific and measurable steps you might consider to advance toward that vision in the next 4 years:

1. Community Engagement and Partnerships:
 - Foster stronger connections between schools, families, and local organizations.
 - Establish regular community forums to gather input, address concerns, and collaborate on solutions.
 - Measure success by increased participation in school events and community programs.
2. Basic Needs Support:
 - Develop programs to address housing and food insecurity among students and their families.
 - Partner with local agencies to provide access to affordable housing, food banks, and other essential services.
 - Monitor progress by tracking the number of families receiving assistance.
3. Quality Education:
 - Invest in teacher professional development to enhance instructional practices.
 - Implement evidence-based teaching methods and personalized learning approaches.
 - Measure success through improved student performance on standardized tests and graduation rates. In addition, standardized tests have assessments meeting students where they are at and determining their learning style and allow them to receive more instruction that fits their learning style to see if this helps with improving their academic progress.
4. Safe Learning Environments:
 - Collaborate with law enforcement, community leaders, and parents to ensure school safety.



- Implement restorative justice practices to address conflicts and reduce disciplinary actions.
 - Monitor safety incidents and student well-being to assess progress.
5. High School Diplomas with Value:
- Strengthen career and college readiness programs.
 - Offer vocational training, internships, and dual enrollment opportunities.
 - Measure success by the percentage of graduates pursuing higher education or entering the workforce successfully. Improve our tracker by seeing who actually participated and not just accepted. Monitor who finishes their post high school experience. Maintain relationships with students that did not enter their post high school experience to see what were the barriers to continue adding improvements to the system.
7. OUSD student enrollment has declined over the last five years. This is not just an Oakland trend but a trend across the Bay Area region. How do you plan to address **declining student enrollment**?

Presented are three potential solutions to address declining student enrollment in OUSD:

1. Marketing and Outreach Campaigns:
 - Develop targeted marketing campaigns to highlight the unique features of OUSD schools.
 - Promote success stories, extracurricular programs, and community engagement initiatives.
 - Collaborate with local media and community influencers to raise awareness.
 2. Enhanced School Choice Options:
 - Expand specialized programs (e.g., STEM, arts, vocational) to attract diverse student interests.
 - Improve transportation options for students attending schools outside their neighborhoods (BART and RideShare Partnerships for students with safety concerns).
 - Continue providing clear information about school options to parents during enrollment periods.
 3. Collaborate with Community Partners:
 - Partner with local businesses, nonprofits, and community centers.
 - Create joint programs that benefit both students and the community.
 - Leverage community resources to enhance the overall educational experience.
8. Please share your perspective on the **quantity of public schools in Oakland**. Should the district consolidate schools or maintain the current number that exists today?



I am in favor of consolidating schools because of the declining student enrollment. However, the campuses that merge should be repurposed into community enrichment centers. These centers would provide support for GED programs, professional certificates, community space for nonprofits, and housing for individuals working with youth or transitional-age youth (ages 18 to 25). By combining efficiency with community impact, we can create a stronger educational system in Oakland.

9. What are the sources of the **low literacy and math scores** of OUSD students? How can the district meaningfully improve them? What will you specifically do to see that change during your 4 years on the board? The sources of the problems are socioeconomic impact, trauma and pandemic effects, and collaborative leadership and support.

To meaningfully improve literacy and math scores in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), consider the following strategies:

1. Targeted Interventions:
 - Early Literacy Programs: Implement evidence-based literacy programs in elementary schools. Focus on phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.
 - Math Intervention Teams: Create specialized teams to support struggling math students. Provide small-group instruction and personalized learning plans.
2. Professional Development:
 - Teacher Training: Invest in ongoing professional development for teachers. Equip them with effective teaching strategies, especially for diverse learners.
 - Math Coaches: Employ math coaches who collaborate with teachers to enhance math instruction.
3. Curriculum Alignment:
 - Aligned Curriculum: Ensure curriculum materials align with state standards and are culturally relevant.
 - Regular Review: Continuously assess and update curricula to address student needs.
4. Parent and Community Engagement:
 - Family Literacy Workshops: Engage parents in literacy activities. Provide resources for reading at home.
 - Math Nights: Host community events to demystify math concepts and involve families.
5. Data-Driven Decision-Making:
 - Assessment Data: Regularly analyze student performance data. Identify trends and adjust instructional approaches.
 - Response to Intervention (RTI): Implement RTI frameworks to provide targeted support based on student needs.



Four year phase plan would have to work with the school COST managers to implement the program action plan to enhance family engagement and family tutoring in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) over the next four years:

1. Family Engagement:
 - Monthly Workshops: Organize monthly workshops for parents and guardians. Topics can include understanding curriculum, supporting homework, and fostering a positive learning environment at home.
 - Parent Ambassadors: Recruit and train parent ambassadors from diverse backgrounds. They can serve as liaisons between schools and families, sharing information and encouraging participation.
 - Family Resource Centers: Establish resource centers within schools where families can access information, attend workshops, and connect with community services.
2. Family Tutoring Program:
 - Peer Tutoring: Create a peer tutoring program where older students (high schoolers) mentor younger students. This promotes academic support and builds positive relationships.
 - Parent Volunteers: Encourage parents to volunteer as tutors during after-school hours. Provide training and resources to support effective tutoring.
 - Online Tutoring Platform: Develop an online platform where families can request tutoring sessions and connect with qualified tutors virtually.
3. Communication Channels:
 - Regular Updates: Ensure consistent communication between teachers and families. Share student progress, upcoming events, and opportunities for involvement.
 - Multilingual Outreach: Provide information in multiple languages to accommodate diverse families.
 - Social Media Engagement: Use social media platforms to share success stories, tips, and reminders related to family engagement and tutoring.
4. Assessment and Feedback:
 - Feedback Surveys: Collect feedback from families about their experiences with tutoring programs and engagement initiatives.
 - Assess Impact: Regularly assess the impact of family engagement efforts on student outcomes. Adjust strategies based on data.

10. How will you ensure the **equitable education of all students** across the district and that prepares every student for college and/or career success? Certainly! Here's a statement based on your input:

As a candidate for the OUSD School Board representing District 3, I am committed to ensuring equitable education for all students. I will advocate for fair resource allocation, culturally relevant



curriculum, and strong family engagement. By listening to families and educational staff directly, we can bridge gaps and prepare every student for college and career success.

11. What role should charter schools play in Oakland's education landscape? What do you feel OUSD should do differently as it relates to its **oversight and policy-making for charter schools** in the district? What should it keep doing? What measurable steps will you take as a board member as it relates to OUSD charter schools? OUSD has a Charter School Committee that monitors the ongoing progress of charter schools. As a school board member based on the number of students that we have enrolled in our schools I don't think it is a good time to open up a new charter school. I think it is a good time to improve the existing educational institutions in our district.

12. The district has been plagued by financial problems for years. What do you think should be done to **fiscally put the district on the right track**?

Four Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) on a fiscally strategies can be considered:

1. Budget Transparency and Accountability: OUSD should prioritize transparency in its financial operations. Regularly publishing detailed budgets, expenditure reports, and financial audits will help build trust with the community and ensure that resources are allocated efficiently.
2. Revenue Diversification: OUSD can explore alternative revenue sources beyond traditional funding. This might involve seeking grants, collaborating with local businesses, or leveraging community partnerships to support educational programs.
3. Advocacy and Legislative Efforts: The district can advocate for increased state funding for education. Collaborating with other districts and education organizations to push for policy changes can positively impact OUSD's financial stability.
4. Long-Term Financial Planning: OUSD should develop a comprehensive, multi-year financial plan. This plan should align with the district's strategic goals and address both short-term challenges and long-term sustainability.

13. **Teachers and staff** are the heart of a thriving school district. What specific measures will you take as a school board member to make OUSD the district of choice for teachers, staff, and other employees?

As a school board member, there are several specific measures I would take to make OUSD the district of choice for teachers, staff, and other employees:

1. Competitive Compensation: Advocate for competitive salaries and benefits for educators and staff. Attracting and retaining top talent requires fair compensation that reflects the cost of living in the area.



2. Professional Development Opportunities: Invest in ongoing professional development programs. Offering workshops, conferences, and mentorship opportunities helps employees grow in their careers and stay motivated.
3. Safe and Supportive Work Environment: Prioritize safety and create a positive work environment. Address any safety concerns promptly and foster a culture of respect and collaboration.
4. Clear Communication Channels: Improve communication between the district and employees. Regular updates, transparent decision-making, and accessible channels for feedback build trust.
5. Recognition and Appreciation: Celebrate employee achievements and contributions. Recognize outstanding work through awards, appreciation events, and public acknowledgments.
6. Equitable Resources: Ensure that all schools have access to necessary resources, including technology, supplies, and support staff. Equity across schools is essential for employee satisfaction.
7. Collaboration with Unions: Collaborate with employee unions to negotiate fair contracts and address concerns. A strong partnership benefits both employees and the district.
8. Work-Life Balance: Promote work-life balance by minimizing unnecessary administrative burdens and providing flexible scheduling options where feasible.
9. Community Engagement: Engage with the community to showcase the district's strengths. Highlight success stories, involve parents, and create a sense of pride in OUSD.
10. Retention Strategies: Develop targeted retention strategies. Exit interviews can provide insights into areas for improvement and help reduce turnover.