

Dr. Roberta Mayor
Interim Superintendent

Oakland Unified School District
1025 Second Avenue
Oakland, CA 94606
www.ousd.k12.ca.us



Communications Office
Contact: Troy Flint

Phone (510) 879-8242
Cell (510) 206-3737
Fax (510) 879-8800
troy.flint@ousd.k12.ca.us

Oakland Unified School District Press Advisory

For Immediate Release

Oakland Unified School District Adopts “A-G” Standard for All Students

Tougher curriculum means all OUSD students must meet UC-CSU eligibility requirements to receive diploma

Oakland – June 12, 2009 – The Oakland Board of Education cast a major vote for equity and academic rigor when its members unanimously adopted a resolution aligning OUSD graduation requirements with entry requirements for the University of California and California State University systems. The decision, made at the Board’s June 10 meeting, means that for the Class of 2015 (freshmen in 2011), an Oakland diploma will require successful completion of the “A-G” curriculum – a sequence of at least 15 high school courses (18 recommended) covering history, social science, English, mathematics, laboratory science, foreign language, visual and performing arts and college-preparatory electives.

Interest in the A-G curriculum has grown along with the volume of research demonstrating that a higher minimum standard of education is critical to personal and academic development as well as competitiveness in an increasingly technology-based economy. In order to help students meet the challenges of a more demanding workplace and ensure that all students are encouraged to fulfill their potential, the Board opted for the more rigorous A-G curriculum.

“While we recognize that not everyone will go to college, we also believe that all students can and should achieve according to their particular interests and abilities,” explained Oakland Board of Education President Noel Gallo. “A-G increases the odds that students will realize their potential by offering them the skills required to provide for themselves in the 21st Century economy, whether or not they plan to attend university.”

While any student wishing to enter a four-year public college in the State of California must meet the A-G standard, knowledge acquired through the A-G curriculum is now a prerequisite for many positions that had far less stringent requirements a generation or two ago. In 1950, 20 percent of jobs were considered “skilled”, now about 85 percent of all jobs are classified in that way. Employment as a sheet metal worker, tool and die maker, or automotive, avionics or home appliance technician often requires training in algebra, geometry, trigonometry, physics and technical reading, among other disciplines.

“Students led a broad coalition in this charge for equity of opportunity through access to a college and career prep curriculum for all students,” said OUSD Chief Academic Officer Brad Stam. “The unanimous support of the Board is a testament to student voice as a force for social justice, and is a victory for all of Oakland. “Bringing this vision to fruition will take hard work, but our current standards are not that far removed from A-G and the new Superintendent is committed to ensuring that the bar of expectation – as well as the bar for student support – is raised even higher. We will continue to partner with students, teachers and the community to see that this vision of student success is implemented through high quality instruction in every classroom, every day.”

Every student. Every classroom. Every day.

The Board's decision was welcomed by many observers who viewed adoption of the A-G curriculum as a boon not only for the professional prospects of OUSD students, but also as a victory for equity that will raise expectations for students, and eventually, boost results.

This view was elaborated by OUSD Student Board Member Cecilia Lopez, who noted that, "I had to take pre-algebra in high school. That was a waste of my year. I could have been done with pre-calculus my junior year if I didn't have to take that class. If we have A-G, it's not whether we can do it or not; it's whether the adults are willing to support us."

In order to help students cope with the demands of the new curriculum, the Board resolution stipulates that increased resources be devoted to curriculum counseling services. Presently, just 17 percent of California's school districts provide an A-G curriculum for all students, but studies show that in districts that have adopted A-G, students rise to the challenge and equity increases.

OUSD officials added that the need for greater rigor is most profound in those school districts serving large low-income, African-American and Latino populations, a circumstance which exacerbates the achievement gap and imperils the economic future of many urban and rural communities.

"We want to provide our students an academic experience which empowers them to pursue a career of their choosing, not one that condemns them to a life of diminished options because of decisions made on their behalf during adolescence," Stam explained. "It's a moral imperative that all students take A-G classes and, unfortunately, too many of our students are channeled into courses which cannot help them realize their ambitions. Adopting the A-G curriculum is both a powerful statement against and a huge step toward changing that reality."