Quality Schools
Strategy Update: June 2018

QUALITY SCHOOLS: LOGIC MODEL

- **10,000 High-Quality School Seats by 2020**
- **Academic growth in both English Language Arts and Math for all disenfranchised student populations including African American, Latino, low socio-economic status students, and students in Special Education**

ISSUE: Oakland schools have improved over the past decade, but achievement gaps persist. Transformative action is needed to create high-quality schools for students furthest from opportunity.

FOCUS OF CHANGE: ● Develop high quality seats across the ecosystem ● Create opportunities for the most underserved students ● Develop capacity of the system to create and sustain quality schools

ASSUMPTIONS: ● Families/communities drive change ● City and school district in alignment ● Quality MUST exist across neighborhood K-12 pipelines ● Growth potential among high-functioning school operators ● System infrastructure needs capacity supports for school transformation ● Collaboration matters

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

We see slow, incremental improvement at select Oakland public schools, both district and charter. We know this improvement effects too few families. We know that change happens when students are at the center of instructional, cultural, organizational, and structural shifts. We know that students, parents, teachers and administrators must be engaged for the shifts to be sustainable. We know we have too many public schools in Oakland to serve ALL Oakland students well. We know that the schools we have don't provide all the opportunities we want for our city's children. We know that a successful public-school system – a system that includes both district and charter schools – demands collaboration. **We have learned that a coherent, aligned system that puts students at the center, not only in name, but also in action, is the only path to a quality education for all Oakland children.**

STRATEGIES

Use Data to Inform Practice ● Beyond the Grant Support

Direct Investments in Innovative Schools

Build Capacity to Create & Sustain High-Quality Schools

Enable Conditions for Quality

WHAT WE DON'T FUND

The Rogers Family Foundation recognizes there are many pathways to support quality school development, but must make strategic and tactical decisions given our limited funding and staffing resources. While the following also represent critical supports for students furthest from opportunity, the Quality Schools strategy will not fund:

- Afterschool and out-of-school time programs
- Summer programs
- Programs that don't have a clear relationship to student academic outcomes
- Early childhood (0 to 5) initiatives

WHAT YOU'LL SEE IN THIS DOCUMENT

In this document we outline the kinds of work the Foundation may support (*In this strategy, the Foundation could potentially invest in*…) and the kinds of outcomes we hope for (*what does success look like*). We don't support projects based on these lists alone, but this is the kind of work and the sorts of outcomes we hope to see.
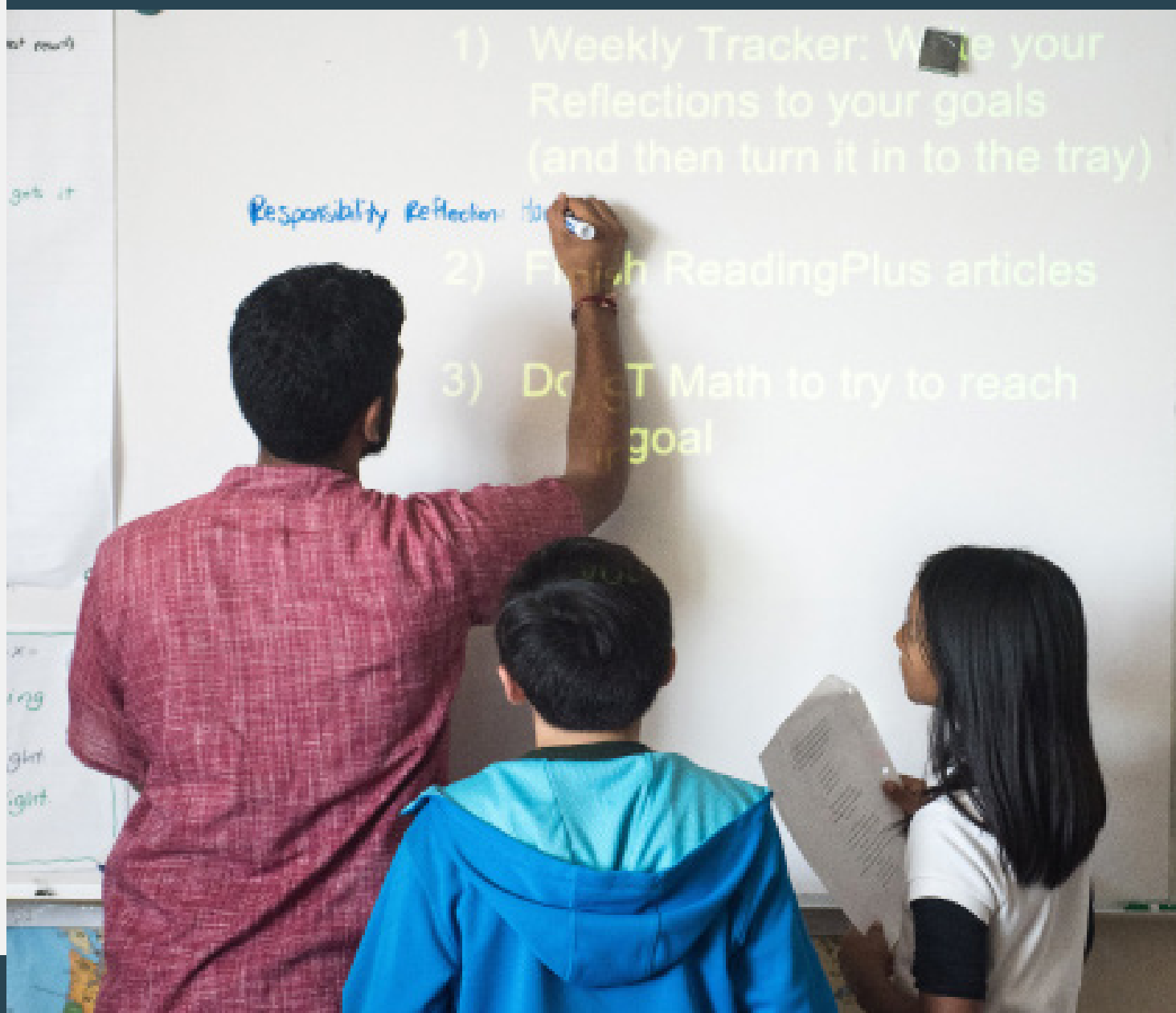
QUALITY SCHOOL: STRATEGY UPDATE

DEFINING QUALITY: A DEPARTURE POINT FOR STRATEGY

What is a quality seat?

In education, what does quality mean to us as a community?

As defined by the state of California, quality is the combination of status and change that results in a performance level that meets or exceeds the standard for all students and all student subgroups.

As a foundation, we use this definition when we look at seats across Oakland — valuing growth as much as the status "snapshot"— but we also know that measuring quality this way does not encompass all of the elements that drive school quality. That is, we know measuring quality will always be limited to a handful of comparative data points that will never fully capture the complexity of factors that contribute to school quality. We know that culture impacts what quality means and how you get there. From a practical standpoint, the tools to measure quality must look at performance via a limited set of academic and culture/climate data points; these data points reflect the aspects of school quality most readily measured by standardized data. Effectively, while measuring quality in this way, we also hold the imperfectly measurable elements of quality in mind when looking at the student experience.

Children must feel safe to learn. Children must be engaged in learning in ways that allow them to make meaning and learn to think critically. Teachers and leaders must feel supported and inspired to grow professionally and continue learning. Families must feel engaged and empowered by the system.

While progress has been made, Oakland public education is failing children and families the furthest from opportunity, including African American, Hispanic, Newcomers, and students in Special Education, in deep East Oakland, in West Oakland, and neighborhoods in between. At the Rogers Family Foundation, we strive to serve those children and families, with a particular emphasis on communities and neighborhoods which have endured long standing disinvestment in education and the programs that support and enable the conditions for quality education.

The Quality Schools Strategy pursues both measurable and imperfectly measurable avenues towards quality to achieve the goal of 10,000 high quality seats by 2020.

QUALITY SCHOOLS STRATEGY: HOW WE GET TO QUALITY SEATS

Three strategies comprise the Quality Schools strategy:

    I.   Direct investment in innovative schools

    II.   Enable Conditions for Quality Schools

    III. Build Capacity to Create and Sustain High-Quality Schools

We see simultaneous investment in seats, classrooms, schools, and the ecosystem as multiple points of leverage for enabling systemic change.

STRATEGY I: DIRECT INVESTMENT IN INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS

The Oakland education landscape is saturated with schools but lacking in quality. While growth can be seen in discrete pockets across the city, as a whole only two K-8 schools fit the state definition of quality (California State Dashboard, fall 2017 release). Innovation is critical to increase the number of quality seats in the system. Innovation is not just the latest education technology program or newest fad. Innovation is breaking patterns and trying something new. Innovation is contextual. Innovation that supports quality can take the form of instruction, classroom management, curriculum and programs that support a specific population, as well as other interventions that support the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) of students and adults and the overall culture and climate of the school. Innovation requires consistent reflection and iteration and often takes time to yield results. Innovation for innovation's sake is not the goal; rather innovation that leads to permanent shifts in practice that support quality education. This systemic shift is the desired change.

In this strategy, the Foundation could potentially:

- Support schools serving disenfranchised populations well (African American, Hispanic, Newcomers, students in Special Education, etc.), in ways that result in observable growth as measured by the state accountability system.
- Support schools with a model, service, or program that results in a quality seat, as measured by the state accountability system.
- Support models, services, and programs that support adults in innovative ways that result in improved academic achievement for students.

What does success look like:

- Improved academic status and/or growth as defined by the state accountability system across individual or all subgroups.
- Reduced chronic absenteeism
- Improved school climate/culture
- Diverse array of quality education experiences across the Oakland education landscape.
- Increase in recruitment and retention of a high-quality, diverse teaching staff resulting in quality interactions between adults and students and improved student outcomes for children of color.

STRATEGY II: ENABLE CONDITIONS FOR QUALITY

The Foundation measures the creation of quality seats by two definitions:

- By the state's bar, a quality school is a school that meets all the indicator performance level goals as defined in California's Every Student Succeeds Act plan at both the All Students level and all reportable/significant student subgroups.
- At the local level, we will also look at schools that meet all performance level goals at the All Students level as a way to identify schools with student achievement gaps that might be poised for success for all student subgroups.

Measuring quality is limited by a handful of comparative data points that will never fully capture the complexity of factors that contribute to school quality. Not all measures of success for our grantees can be captured or reflected by these tools that rely heavily on standardized data. Investments that enable the conditions for quality often fall into this imprecise space.

While there are a number of entry points to enable the conditions for quality, this strategy focuses on three in particular: **ecosystem readiness and development, organizing and advocacy** as related to school quality, and **collaborative spaces to create and support quality**.

Ecosystem Readiness and Development

Ecosystem readiness and development refers to the necessary work that happens beyond the school site to both develop quality seats as well as sustain that quality once reached. In Oakland, we have not only one public school district but also more than 25 charter operators. Our ecosystem is fractured and siloed when it comes to public education in a way that impedes quality across the city. We must think about how one investment might impact others in the landscape, always. The work of unifying and nurturing this landscape to become one that is ready to support student achievement is methodical and multi-faceted.

In this strategy, the Foundation could potentially:

- Develop and support organizations that intercede at the system level with multiple actors in work that supports that development of quality seats.
- Support programs and projects that intentionally work across charters and across governance to improve student academic achievement.

What does success look like?

- Increase in number of cross-charter and cross-sector initiatives that support student learning.

Organizing and Advocacy

Organizing and advocacy enable the conditions for quality by advancing the collective power of parents furthest from opportunity so that they can demand quality and inform the design of quality schools in their neighborhoods and citywide.

In this strategy, the Foundation could potentially:

- Support initiatives that build community amongst organizers across charter and district schools to promote system wide activism to advance quality.
- Develop and support initiatives that focus on quality (academic achievement and/or school culture), rather than school governance as a means to student achievement.

What does success look like?

- An articulated organizing and advocacy landscape working towards some common goals.
- Engaged parents empowered to push on the system to demand quality across all neighborhoods.
- Complementary site based and system wide campaigns that achieve concrete goals related to school quality.

Collaborative Spaces to Create and Support Quality

Connecting, enabling, and facilitating work happening around the city promotes efficiency and efficacy that ultimately supports quality. One of the most important collaborative spaces is around data – the transparency of data across schools and systems to enable honest conversations and the sharing of best practices, as well as the use of data to improve academic outcomes.

In this strategy, the foundation could potentially:

- Support initiatives that promote the sharing and use of data and continuous improvement practices.
- Support initiatives that bring together disparate actors around particular issues that create and sustain quality seats.

What does success look like?

- Robust data sharing climate as evidenced by ongoing, public discussions of ways to use data to inform instruction.
- Increase in number of opportunities for professional development and collaboration across educator communities.
- Improved academic outcomes.

STRATEGY III: BUILD CAPACITY TO CREATE AND SUSTAIN HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOLS

Developing the ability of the system to produce and sustain quality seats is critical to the overall health of the education ecosystem. This strategy embraces a holistic approach that supports Oakland's interrelated capacity building initiatives.

In this strategy, the Foundation could potentially:

- Support capacity building efforts for rigorous instruction.
- Support Social and Emotional learning of educators.
- Support initiatives that support and sustain teachers of color.
- Support design thinking skills of educators at all levels.

What does success look like?

- High quality instruction as evidenced by improved scores on state administered tests across individual or all subgroups.
- High scores on school culture/climate surveys.
- Retention of a high quality, diverse teaching staff resulting in improved student outcomes.
- Shifts in practice that evidence design thinking at play at both the system (district and charter management organization) and school site levels.