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For Immediate Distribution
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BayCES Open Letter to the BayCES Network Regarding Expect Success!—the Oakland District Redesign Initiative

Dear Friend and/or Colleague:

As a founding partner in *Expect Success!* the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) is now working to transition full leadership of the project to newly appointed State Administrator Dr. Kimberly Statham and her leadership team. We believe this leadership change creates an excellent opportunity to generate broader internal and external support for achieving the project's vision for the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to become the highest performing and most equitable urban school district in California over the next five to seven years. We are proud of our role in launching and co-leading this work through the startup phase and BayCES will continue to provide technical assistance and guidance to OUSD as a supporting partner in *Expect Success!*.

What is *Expect Success!*?

Expect Success! is a bold and comprehensive, three-year, \$43 million dollar initiative to transform OUSD, moving beyond recovery to renewal and continued success. The project puts in place key changes needed to continue the district's track record of achievement gains while addressing the severe challenges OUSD faces with declining enrollment, increased competition from charters, community demand for better schools and a state loan of \$100 million dollars to repay. These changes will:

- Continue and deepen innovative school programs that are already getting results—results that made OUSD the fastest improving large urban district in California over the last four years;
- Give schools control over their budgets, program and staffing because principals, parents and teachers should be making the key decisions about how to best serve their students;
- Hold central office accountable for providing excellent services to schools
- Improve the quality of school leadership, learning environments and teacher instructional practices;
- Invest in professional development for teachers and other district staff members;
- Improve central office efficiency and quality with new technology systems; and
- Give students and parents quality schools to choose from no matter what neighborhood they live in.

BayCES History in OUSD

With ten years of consistent work in Oakland, BayCES' strength has been its ability to focus on bold, seemingly impossible outcomes and engage multiple stakeholders in pursuing them with relentless optimism, vision, creativity and hard work.

- In 1999, when OCO organized for small schools, we provided technical assistance; and in 2000, when the community called for a small school policy, BayCES authored it and the OUSD school board passed it unanimously.
- BayCES started up a small schools incubator, raised the money to support it, and helped transition it into the district as the New School Development Group in 2003-04.
- Forty new small schools—39 of them still operating—have been launched in Oakland since 2000, all designed with full participation from teams of teachers, parents, students, educational technical assistance providers and community members under the guidance of enthusiastic and capable principals.
- In 2003, when Oakland's dysfunctional central office collapsed in deficit and a state takeover, we collaborated with OUSD to launch a district redesign effort called *Expect Success!* that has earned the attention of the state and the nation for its innovative design, bold vision and accomplishments to date—three straight years of academic improvement through a period of extreme challenges.
- Over the last six years, BayCES has played the lead role in raising more than 50 million dollars in external funds to support Oakland reforms.

BayCES Co-Leadership of *Expect Success!*

Two years ago BayCES entered the partnership that created and managed *Expect Success!* at the invitation of Dr. Ward and his Special Assistant Katrina Scott-George. Most of the district's reform leaders had departed with the state takeover and Dr. Ward needed a leader with the vision, institutional memory, relationships and technical expertise to continue the progress made under Dennis Chaconas. At Dr. Ward and Ms. Scott-George's petition, the BayCES Board of Trustees agreed to reassign our Executive Director Steve Jubb to serve as project co-leader. From the very beginning both parties viewed this unusual relationship as transitional. Now that the district's full leadership team is in place and ready, Steve has transitioned out of his leadership role and returned to BayCES where he continues to play an advisory role to the project.

BayCES sees this moment as an opportunity to create stronger, broader understanding and support for *Expect Success!* while not losing the momentum needed to make progress. Therefore, *Expect Success!* is entering a short period of transition, redefinition and adjustment. Accordingly, Dr. Statham has asked BayCES (and we have agreed) to continue providing technical assistance to district leadership to create a short-term plan for continuing critical work and to make needed adjustments in the long term plan to ensure that that district achieves fiscal recovery while it puts in place much needed changes in the central office and schools. We will renegotiate our partnership once the new plan is created.

As is always the case, BayCES measures its success by looking at the bottom line: student academic success and positive life outcomes after high school. Today, just over five years after the passage of the small school policy, Oakland has higher and more equitable achievement, a higher percentage of college-ready graduates every

year, more students staying in school and graduating, and better student attendance, just to name a few key success indicators. Our expectation is to continue as a trusted, reliable and effective district partner in *Expect Success!*. In the months to come BayCES and OUSD will accelerate the work of engaging multiple stakeholders in understanding and influencing the direction of OUSD.

Our hope is that you take the time to learn about *Expect Success!* and what it means for you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert D. Spencer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Robert D. Spencer
President, BayCES Board of Trustees