



Board Office Use: Legislative File Info.	
File ID Number	21-0948
Introduction Date	4/28/2021
Enactment Number	
Enactment Date	

Board Cover Memorandum

To Board of Education

From VanCedric Williams, Board Member

Meeting Date May 26, 2021

Subject Resolution No. 2021-0155 - Supporting Yemeni Students and Families in OUSD

Ask of the Board Adoption of Resolution No. 2021-0155 - Supporting Yemeni Students and Families in OUSD

Background Yemeni students constitute the fifth largest group of newcomers in OUSD and a significant portion of Arabic-speaking families in OUSD are from Yemen. At the same time, Arabic-speaking students are graduating below the District average and report high rates of bullying. Education in Yemen has been disrupted since the 2011 Arab Spring and as a result of the subsequent civil war, with students often receiving only a few hours of schooling instead of a full day. Additionally, critical activities (such as getting a transcript or transferring of credits) are significantly more challenging for students from Yemen.

While the Resolution is based on feedback from the Yemeni community in Oakland and addresses some of their needs, it also benefits the larger Arab and Muslim community of Oakland and will be widely supported and celebrated. This Resolution was initiated by Dhaifallah M. Dhaifallah, the PR for the Yemeni American Association, which represents the Yemeni American community in the Bay Area. It was also supported by the American Association of Yemeni Students & Professionals, which aims to overcome educational barriers for the Yemeni American community.

Discussion

The Resolution urges the Superintendent to recruit and retain teachers that represent Yemeni students, hire Arabic-speaking staff in the Enrollment Office, hire more Arabic-speaking tutors and counselors with an awareness of the Yemeni dialect of Arabic and Yemeni culture (including those with an awareness of the Yemeni dialect of Arabic and Yemeni culture), and add two annual one-hour staff trainings/workshops regarding Yemeni and Arabic culture. The Resolution also directs the Superintendent to recognize and include two Muslim holidays on the OUSD calendar beginning 2021-2022.

Fiscal Impact

The Resolution does not require any action in which the District would incur additional expenses. However, it does urge the Superintendent to hire additional staff such as enrollment staff, translators, and counselors. Most of the positions listed do not currently have vacancies. As a result, the only way to currently hire the staff as urged by the Resolution would be to create new positions. Adding an enrollment welcome center counselor (a position at the Student Welcome Center) would be estimated to cost (salary and benefits) an average of \$104,000. Adding a full-time translator would be estimated to cost an average of \$97,000. Adding a full-time counselor would be estimated to cost an average of \$110,000. The Resolution also urges the Superintendent to add two annual one-hour staff trainings/workshops, which would be estimated to cost \$20,000, although the cost would vary depending on how many employees received the trainings.

Attachment(s)

- Resolution No. 2021-0155 - Supporting Yemeni Students and Families in OUSD

**RESOLUTION OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Resolution No. 2021-0155

Supporting Yemeni Students and Families in OUSD

WHEREAS, currently 86% (387 out of 450) of non-US born Arabic speakers in the Oakland Unified School District (“OUSD” or “District”) are from Yemen;

WHEREAS, Yemeni students constitute the fifth largest group of newcomers in OUSD;

WHEREAS, there are currently 871 students in OUSD from Arabic speaking families;

WHEREAS, 88% (152 out of 173) of current Newcomers who speak Arabic are from Yemen;

WHEREAS, the 4-year cohort graduation rate for Yemeni students was only 67% in 2019-20;

WHEREAS, based on the prior three administrations of the California Healthy Kids Elementary School Survey, annually, over half of Arabic speaking elementary students reported being bullied by their peers;

WHEREAS, the admission of refugees from certain countries, including Yemen, have been severely restricted, leading to only three refugees from Yemen being admitted to the United States in 2019 (although other Yemenis have been admitted through other means);

WHEREAS, education in Yemen has been disrupted since the 2011 Arab Spring and the subsequent civil war, with students often receiving only a few hours of schooling instead of a full day; and

WHEREAS, normal activities, such as transcript transfers of credits, are significantly more challenging for students coming from war-torn countries such as Yemen.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Education (“Board”) hereby urges the Superintendent to recruit and retain teachers that represent Yemeni students, through activities such as OUSD job fairs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board hereby urges the Superintendent to hire more Arabic-speaking staff, including some with an awareness of the Yemeni dialect of Arabic and Yemeni culture, to (i) support Arabic-speaking families with enrollment as well as family outreach and recruitment events and (ii) provide additional Arabic-translation support for schools communications;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board hereby urges the Superintendent to hire more Arabic-speaking tutors and counselors, including those with an awareness of the Yemeni dialect of Arabic and Yemeni culture;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board hereby urges the Superintendent to add two annual one-hour trainings/workshops for school site staff regarding Yemeni and Arabic culture, particular at school sites with higher percentages of Yemeni families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board hereby directs the Superintendent to recognize and include Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha on the OUSD calendar beginning 2021-2022.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Education of the Oakland Unified School District this ____ day of _____, 2021, by the following vote:

PREFERENTIAL AYE:

PREFERENTIAL NOE:

PREFERENTIAL ABSTENTION:

PREFERENTIAL RECUSE:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAINED:

RECUSED:

ABSENT:

CERTIFICATION

We hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of a Resolution passed at a Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of the Oakland Unified School District held on _____
_____ 2021.

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By:	

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Shanthy Gonzales
President, Board of Education

Kyla Johnson-Trammell
Superintendent and Secretary, Board of Education