



## **PRESS RELEASE – ORANGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

For immediate release

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### **Orange Unified School District Launches Community-Based, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Facility Improvement Project**

ORANGE, CALIF. – Feb. 21, 2014 – Orange Unified School District (OUSD) has launched a series of information sessions to present proposals, based on community input, for addressing much needed infrastructure improvements to its four high schools. The District's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Facility Improvement project is being presented at open meetings in February and March, most recently last evening at Canyon High School. The first session, held at Orange High School on February 13, generated strong community turnout and participation.

The high schools in the District are showing the significant effects of many years of lagging investment in general upkeep and refurbishment in areas from general classrooms and labs to performing arts spaces and athletic facilities. They are also falling behind in providing the kinds of innovative spaces and resources that have been identified for successful 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning and interaction.

"Our 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Plan includes a new vision and investment in modernizing our high schools to help build a stronger school system for students, teachers, parents and the community," said OUSD Superintendent Michael Christensen. "These revitalized schools will provide more choices and opportunities in the areas of technology, personalized learning and career readiness, putting our students ahead with a competitive advantage."

The facilities improvement project is an integral part of the District's overall 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Plan designed to create high-quality education pathways to success that help students compete in a global economy. Input from the community has been a primary driver of the improvements identified for each high school.

"Statistically, newer schools do better than older ones in creating a culture of high expectations, effective teaching and successful learning," noted John Ortega, President of the OUSD Board of Education. "This commitment to the future represents what's best for our students. Our students always come first, and they deserve no less."

The District has engaged four leading local architectural firms, each focusing on one high school. At Thursday evening's session, gkkworks presented their proposal for modernizing Canyon High School based on input from that community. Recommendations included updated classrooms and new science labs, removal of 30-year-old portables, a new performing arts center, and improved athletic facilities such as an expanded gym, all-weather track and 50-meter pool. In addition, that community would like to have a football stadium for the school.

Funding for the OUSD 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Facility Improvement project would come from an anticipated bond issue in Fall 2014 as well as from other sources including available state funds and ancillary community fundraising.

Upcoming community sessions are Thursday, March 13, 6:00 p.m., at El Modena High School and Thursday, March 27, 6:00 p.m., at Villa Park High School.

For more information, visit the OUSD website at [www.orangeusd.k12.ca.us](http://www.orangeusd.k12.ca.us).

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