



*Bringing Oakland Together for Our Students*

## **STATEMENT**

**Great Oakland Public Schools emphasizes community values of keeping dollars close to students, transparency about budgets, and flexibility with resources to guide the Oakland Unified School District's 2011-12 budget process.**

*We are a coalition of families, teachers, principals, community and nonprofit leaders joining together to support OUSD leadership to improve OUSD's initial 2011-2012 budget proposal and demand that California provide its children with quality and appropriately funded public education.*

This week, Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) leadership released their 2011-2012 budget proposal amidst the challenging economic environment here in Oakland and budget crisis statewide.

Earlier this month, Governor Brown proposed a special election in June to increase taxes in an effort to preserve education funding. If the Governor's proposal does not pass, education funding statewide will take massive hits. OUSD leadership has asked school sites to prepare two budgets – one for if the Governor's proposal passes, one for if it fails.

In the best case scenario where the tax passes, the current OUSD proposal still cuts \$7.2 million in unrestricted funds from the district budget, and OUSD leadership is proposing that schools bear 100 percent of that burden. This translates to cuts of approximately \$190 per student, or about \$56,000 less for a school of 300 students.

In the worst case scenario where the tax does not pass, the current OUSD proposal cuts \$19.1 million in unrestricted funds from the district budget, with school sites again bearing 100 percent of the cuts. This translates to approximately \$500 per student or \$150,000 less for a school of 300 students.

In either case, these cuts are on top of a reduction in schools' Title I allocation. Our schools serving the most vulnerable student populations may have to cut upwards of \$500 or \$750 per student.

As we navigate this complicated and difficult process, we urge OUSD leaders to apply these child- and school-centered values for resource allocation.

## Value #1

### **We value preserving resources close to students and keeping cuts as far away from students as possible.**

School communities city-wide are contemplating another year of very difficult decisions about increasing class sizes, combining classes, canceling academic intervention programs, decreasing teacher preps and collaboration time, etc. The proposed cuts to sites will have devastating effects on schools' instructional programs. Below are specific examples from two OUSD schools:

“We are a 250-student school with a high free-and-reduced lunch population. Because of the reductions in Title I and General Purpose (GP) funding, we have to make a \$200,000 cut. Cuts in Title I are particularly brutal as they affect our most vulnerable students. Schools with the highest rates of Title I will have to make the biggest cuts. At our school, we will have to consider options like dramatically increasing class size, eliminating summer interventions, releasing a reading intervention teacher, doing away with our Reading Partners contract, removing our school-wide data coaching, removing our teacher coaches for beginning teachers, and more.”

“We are 400-student school with a low free-and-reduced lunch population. We have to make a \$200,000 cut. We could barely afford our base program before this cut. We have no choice but to close teacher positions and dramatically increase class size. When we raised class size last year, our school grew and it had a dramatic impact on enrollment at many nearby schools.”

In addition, we know that many of the most important factors that drive teacher retention are conditions at the school site – conditions that will be adversely impacted by the proposed cuts at sites.

## Value #2

### **The school and central office budget development process and decision-making should be transparent so that school communities can participate. We value having the information we need to contribute to good decision-making.**

We request that more detailed information about how central office budget resources are being used be made public. The central office should be responsible for providing evidence of student impact to support the trade-off of cutting programs and instructional staff at school sites.

We know the central office has been cut dramatically and reorganized in recent years. We appreciate that the central office took a giant hit last year. We still believe that some cuts need be made centrally this year. School communities cannot support a

budget where schools take the entire cut, especially when there has been little transparency about how the central office is using its resources.

### Value #3

#### **Funds should be used flexibly to maximize resources for students.**

In this time of budget crisis, the state legislature has allowed specific restricted resources to be used without restriction. We must use this “categorical flexibility” to decrease the hit to schools and maximize the resources going to classrooms. And, if there are more flexible resources that can be sent to sites, they should be. While we understand that these are one-time monies, the purpose of these flexible monies is specifically to help districts weather the worst education funding crisis in the history of California. We should use it accordingly.

We support the Board of Education’s clear priority and direction to staff to eliminate Oakland Unified’s structural deficit. OUSD has made strong progress reducing expenditures while contending with extraordinary declines in state revenues.

OUSD is in the middle of a strategic planning process through which district leadership intends to “right-size” the school district, define quality schools, quality teaching, and quality leadership, and align our efforts towards those ends. Many structural changes including school closures are likely to result from this process. The hard work of restructuring the district (how many schools and where? which programs and services and where?) is the best path to eliminate the remaining structural deficit.

#### **Moving Forward**

Our schools and district face immediate budget challenges. Difficult decisions will be made in the upcoming days and weeks, and we urge our community to join together around the values proposed above. Our schools and students will continue to improve if we prioritize keeping resources where they are needed most – with our students.

We ask Oakland Unified to 1) make central office department budgets public, 2) send at least \$6.9 million of categorical flexibility resources to school sites, and 3) work with community to identify additional central resources that might be allocated to sites.

This June, if the Governor’s proposal prevails in the legislature, our state will have an opportunity. Governor Brown’s ballot measure to extend temporary taxes would provide at least an additional \$12 million to Oakland public schools.

We must collaborate across schools and organizations to create a unified citywide coalition to ensure that Oakland is mobilized to support passing the Governor’s proposal.