



TONY SMITH, PH.D. Superintendent

Dear OUSD Parents, Caregivers, Staff and Supporters,

Welcome back to the 2010-2011 school year! During the break, OUSD employees have been hard at work improving Oakland Public Schools and creating the conditions required for all children to succeed. This letter provides an update on two important developments that occurred over the summer, both of which support OUSD's efforts to accelerate student achievement, social growth, school safety, and teacher retention.

On June 19, the Oakland Board of Education unanimously adopted a Strategic Vision based on the concept of transforming Oakland Unified into a full-service community school district. The full-service community school is a place where the school has broadened its mission and vision to meet the needs of all of its students. In addition to a high-quality education, health, physical education, nutrition, medical, dental, recreation, housing, employment, and language acquisition services are provided in this model, with the school acting as the hub of activity. Social and human services are not seen as extra or add-ons in these schools. Instead, collaboration in service of the well-being of children and families is how these schools consistently behave.

The Strategic Vision, which you can view at www.ousd.k12.ca.us/strategicvision, builds and connects school communities so resources are directed toward the whole child. This, combined with a caring, high-quality teacher in every classroom will create an environment that allows all children to learn at high levels. Recognizing the importance of strong instruction to its overall goals, on July 29, the Board placed an item on the November 2, 2010 ballot called the **Oakland Student Achievement, Support and Safety Measure**. The measure is designed to support teacher effectiveness, provide greater compensation for classroom teachers, and retain adequate levels of school-site support staff. The **Oakland Student Achievement, Support and Safety Measure**, also known as Measure L, asks voters to consider an annual tax of \$195 per parcel for ten years to provide critical support for the success of our schools and our students.

As you may know, massive state budget cuts, reduced federal funding, and a sluggish economy, forced us to slash \$122 million from our 2010-11 budget. The District has already laid off more than 600 people, including teachers, aides, librarians, custodians, school nurses and security staff. These reductions have included dramatic cuts to programs like Early Childhood Development and Adult Education. We've all felt the impact of these losses at each of our school sites—and these types of devastating cuts simply can't continue. The **Oakland Student Achievement, Support and Safety Measure** can help blunt the negative impact of diminishing resources. The proposed Measure includes exemptions for low-income taxpayers and fiscal accountability provisions such as requiring review by the Citizens' Oversight Committee, public expenditure reports, and guaranteed annual independent audits. These fiscal safeguards ensure funds are used efficiently and effectively.

Over the summer, an independent community survey commissioned by the District concluded that Oakland voters remain very supportive of Oakland's schools and are prepared to support a 10-year school parcel tax. I am humbled by the community's support for our parents, teachers, staff and students during the toughest economy in generations. The community clearly recognizes that an experienced, effective teacher in every classroom is one of the most important factors in a child's success. It's clear we must apply a laser-like focus to retaining excellent teachers and improving teacher performance. At this point, we are merely paying our teachers what we can afford, not what they deserve. It is our goal to bring compensation for Oakland teachers to the level of neighboring school districts in Alameda County.

Based on the Academic Performance Index (API), OUSD is the most improved large urban school district in California over the past five years. Additional funding to offset Sacramento budget cuts is essential if we are to maintain and accelerate this progress. In the coming months, I will provide information on our work to ensure high-quality education and equitable outcomes for all students. In the meantime, please visit: www.ousd.k12.ca.us for regular updates on the Oakland Unified School District.

Sincerely,

Tony Smith, Ph.D.