

# OAKLAND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

AN AFFILIATE OF THE CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION AND THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

January 17, 2019

Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Superintendent  
Oakland Unified School District  
1000 Broadway  
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Superintendent Tramell-Johnson:

The Executive Board of the Oakland Education Association is adamantly opposed to the District's plan to close Roots International Academy at the end of this year. We reject the notion that we should close Roots to free up money for teacher compensation - that's morally wrong and fiscally unrealistic. We question the very logic of school closures as a way to improve education and urge you to reconsider this decision which is highly deleterious to the academic, social and emotional health and future of the students now attending that school.

The claim that Roots is a failing school is based on an inaccurate and insensitive interpretation of the data. While test scores may be low, they need to be judged in terms of progress made by students and not against an absolute standard. Test scores in and of themselves are not necessarily a faithful recognition of what students know, as the situation of standardized testing is alien and stressful. Roots has made progress with the students who are there, and those who are graduating attest to their sense of accomplishment and their increased knowledge.

The social situation that students who live in the neighborhood and go to Roots experience is one that is familiar and supportive. Students have strong friendships with their peers and warm and supportive relationships with their teachers. Middle School is a crucial and particularly fraught time in students' development and the sense of security and belonging that the students have there now would be egregiously impacted by splitting the students up and sending them into different neighborhoods.

The belief that sending kids to a higher performing school in a different neighborhood will magically improve their lives is false. One part of the problem is that travelling to another neighborhood isolates them from their social setting and implies that they can not learn where they live. And the "Opportunity" card ignores the anger of the families of the students who are presently attending the higher achieving schools who will be displaced. Where will those students go? If you overload schools with even higher class size, you will be destroying the basis of their academic progress.

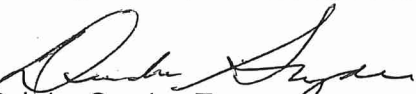
How are students from Roots supposed to get to these higher achieving schools? There are at present no direct bus lines and it is punitive to make children rise exceptionally early to go long distances on AC Transit. OUSD's history with private busing is abysmal.

The fundamental issue is that children in the flatlands of Oakland deserve quality public schools. The obvious and most cost effective way of providing this is to fully fund schools such as Roots and give them more support in nurturing and engaging the students in their local area. Oakland Unified School District's reason for being is to provide quality public education to all students in Oakland. We demand that you take that route and increase funding to Roots, rather than shutting it down.

  
Keith Brown, President

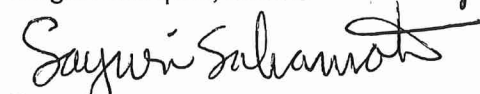
  
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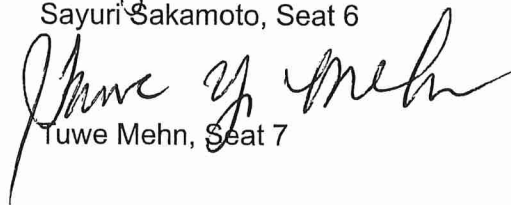
  
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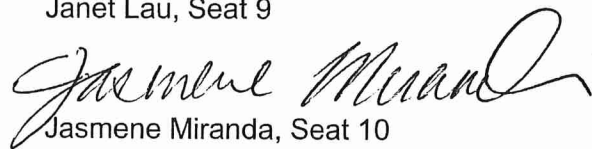
  
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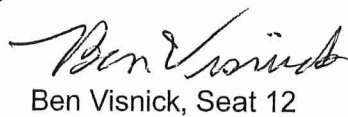
  
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