

OEA Strike FAQ #1

November 2018

1. WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT A STRIKE?

The School Board's failure to negotiate a fair settlement during mediation pushes us dangerously close to preparing for a strike as a last resort to win a fair contract. This is outrageous for a school district that receives 130% more money per student than the statewide average.

We declared "impasse" in May after 18 months of mostly fruitless bargaining. A State-appointed mediator met with our bargaining team and OUSD's team several times to no avail. Next up in the impasse process is a fact finding hearing with both sides making a presentation to a 3-person panel chaired by a State-appointed neutral "fact finder," who will write and release a non-binding report on a recommended settlement. If no agreement is then reached, the School Board can impose their paycut proposal on us and we can go on strike.

We are negotiating for a Living Wage, Class Size Reduction and Student Supports. We are working to end the Teacher Retention Crisis in Oakland.

2. WHO MAKES THE DECISION TO STRIKE?

If OUSD remains unwilling to negotiate a fair agreement, OEA members will be asked to authorize a strike via secret ballot vote. The timing of a strike, if authorized, will be made by our elected OEA leadership. However, the OEA leadership decision if and when to actually go out on strike will be based on the results of the official OEA member strike authorization vote and overall member willingness to go out on strike. Our strength to win comes from a highly united and engaged membership.

3. ARE TEACHER STRIKES LEGAL?

YES. The California Supreme Court and the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) have both upheld the legality of strikes at the conclusion of the impasse procedures (i.e. after the non-binding fact-find report is released) or in response to an Unfair Labor Practice.

Teachers (including probationary and temporary) cannot be fired or disciplined for engaging in a lawful strike. But keep in mind that OUSD will try to use a variety of ways to keep members from participating in a potential strike such as creating fear, sowing division and confusion or by reinforcing a sense of futility that nothing will ever change

in OUSD. Our critical task as active members is to support one another and stand together to resist such attempts to divide us.

4. HOW LONG WILL A STRIKE LAST?

This is determined by the School Board's willingness to offer a fair settlement. A united OEA – with parent & community support – will generate maximum pressure on the School Board to do right by students and teachers, resulting in a shorter strike.

5. WILL WE LOSE MONEY DURING A STRIKE?

We will be docked pay for each day we are on strike. We will lose a pro-rated fraction of our CalSTRS (retirement) annual service credit for each day we are on strike, pennies per strike day. A fair raise should more than make up for these sacrifices.

Teachers do not lose their healthcare coverage during a strike.

CTA will arrange interest-free loans to members in the event that a strike lasts longer than five days. OEA also has a Membership Assistance Fund.

6. WHAT ABOUT OUR STUDENTS?

Our students are already suffering from a budget that prizes Central Office administrators and private vendors over classroom instruction. Too many of our schools lose half of their teachers each year. A strike will momentarily disrupt our schools in exchange for a generation's worth of better learning conditions.

We are seeking community spaces throughout Oakland to use as student lunch distribution points during a strike.

7. WHAT ABOUT PARENTS?

Parents will have a choice to make after looking at the facts. They will ask themselves if their children can get a quality education supplied by strikebreakers, who may or may not be qualified to teach at all. Parents will have to consider if it is "quality education" to move the students into the multi-purpose room and show movies, or have them complete generic lessons with classes of mixed grades with minimal supervision.

8. ARE WE IN THIS ALONE?

NO. Over 300,000 CTA members are standing behind us – with financial assistance, solidarity resolutions, offers to walk our picket lines and more. A cadre of CTA and NEA staff are supporting our leadership. And the Alameda Labor Council is actively encouraging its 135,000 members to support us and stand with us in Union solidarity. We are also part of the growing Red4Ed movement spreading across the US.