

OCT  
2017

# Classroom Struggle

\*Opening and Closing  
Schools Issue\*

Issue  
#13

## New School Year – Same Old Same Old

Welcome back, Oakland teachers and families, to a new school year with daily reminders that we work and learn in the same old OUSD. Yet again, the district is in the midst of a budget crisis and threatening state receivership that would surely lead to draconian cuts to our schools and students. Classroom Struggle has some burning questions as we develop a strategy for the 2017-18 school year and beyond.

**Why is OUSD trying to get community support for closing public schools?** Classroom Struggle cut its teeth fighting public school closures back in 2012-13. We helped to organize a sit-in at one of the “shuttered” public elementary schools. This, and parent outrage, may have led then Superintendent Tony Smith to back off his original plan to close 25 district schools. With their “Blueprint for Quality Schools,” the district now appears to be organizing community support to preempt the almost certain backlash if they announce that even one public school will be shuttered.

**How many public schools does OUSD plan on closing?** A recent blog post on the Educate78 (an astroturf non-profit that is a branch of the uber-privatizing New Schools Venture Fund) website asks the question “Does Oakland have too many schools?” The author, Gloria Lee, uses a chart showing that OUSD operates almost twice as many schools as districts with similar enrollment. In response, an Oakland parent wrote a point-by-point takedown, concluding: “I just can't help but get a sense that what this blog is saying is

that if you're a small district school, you need to be dealt with, but if you are a small charter school, that's okay. ... Currently, approximately half of Oakland's charters have less than 300 students enrolled.” (*Read Oakland parent's full response at [classroomstruggle.org](http://classroomstruggle.org)*)

*(continued on back - Same Old Same Old)*

## Forum on OUSD Budget Crisis vs. Public Schools Oakland Deserves

Tuesday, November 14, 5-7 pm

Location TBD

Food & Childcare provided

Organized by Classroom Struggle

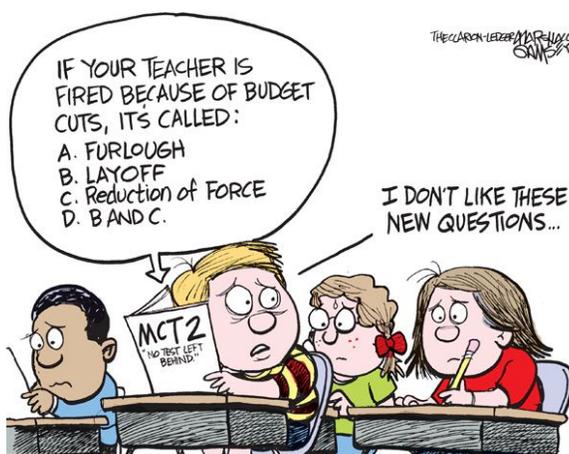
Last January the District suddenly announced a budget crisis just as it was about to enter a new round of bargaining with OEA. The OUSD Blueprint for Quality Schools now threatens to cut programs and staff and close schools rather than redirect millions overspent on private contracts and admin. As we escalate our contract campaign to win needed improvements, we will have to also defend against a renewed assault on OUSD's already-poor conditions.

This forum will address:

- Why we must fight for resources within and beyond OUSD to provide quality public schools for all now and long-term
- Who our opponents are, why they continue to push the false promise of “school choice,” and the damage they are inflicting on Oakland
- How OUSD workers, families, and community members can defeat the attacks on our public schools and make long-deferred progress toward real educational equity and excellence

We should recall that in 2003 the district also “discovered” a financial shortfall as bargaining with OEA began. Privatizers then applied the “shock doctrine” to Oakland as they did to post-Katrina New Orleans two years later. The state took over the

*(continued – Forum on Fight for Oakland Public Schools)*



# Same Old Same Old

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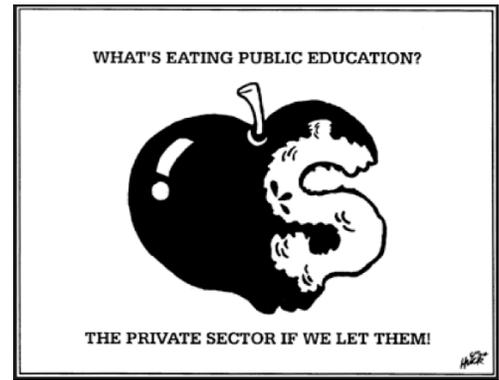
**How many teaching positions will OUSD consolidate mid-year?** It appears the district will take its time before announcing the number of public schools slated for closure, but will not be wasting any time in consolidating teaching positions. Here are excerpts from a letter from a teacher at Manzanita Seed to Supt. Johnson-Trammell:

*Dear Dr. Johnson-Trammell,  
I am parent and teacher at Manzanita SEED and I am writing to plead that you reconsider the consolidation that is scheduled to happen at our school and the consolidations that are happening across the district. I recognize that you inherited a disastrous financial situation, and I do not envy the position that this has placed you in, but our students deserve better. The budget disaster we have in front of us is not the fault of any of our students or anyone who works at a school site. It is not a result of too few teacher consolidations last year (as was stated in the letter that I received in my child's backpack this afternoon). THE BUDGET DISASTER IS A RESULT OF CRIMINAL MISMANAGEMENT OF OUR DISTRICT BY OUR SCHOOL BOARD AND YOUR PREDECESSOR. OUR STUDENTS CANNOT PAY THE PRICE FOR THEIR CRIMES. ... Best, Olivia Udovic, K teacher at Manzanita SEED*

Ms. Udovic goes on to call for the consolidation of central office administration positions and the reduction of administrative salaries to the highest teacher salary instead of further dismantling district schools.

**What should OEA members be doing at our sites to fight teacher consolidations?** Losing a teacher mid-year can be cataclysmic for school sites. Nothing is more demoralizing than hearing a colleague has been laid off because the district and school board are incompetent and did nothing to hold the former superintendent accountable. Short of organizing a critical mass of Oakland teachers and parents for a district-wide strike, what can be done? In the short term here are a few ideas, keeping in mind that the more teachers, parents, students and other school workers take action, the more effective those actions will be.

- Organize or call for a faculty council meeting with your site admin. Recruit parents to attend the meeting.
- Flood the Supt./School Board directors' inboxes with emails, or do a mass call-in to the offices of Supt. /School Board directors.
- Converge on the district offices of Supt./School Board directors and do a sit-in with teachers and parents from as many sites as possible that are faced with consolidations.



## Forum on Fight for Oakland Public Schools

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district and sent in a series of Broad Foundation-trained administrators who closed schools and opened many new charters.

In addition to these immediately devastating impacts, the state takeover inflicted long-term damage to the district's financial stability. It tripled the district's debt – still costing Oakland students \$6 million annually –and increased the diversion of resources from public schools and classrooms to administration, contractors and charters.

Oakland students, families, community members, and educators need, deserve, and demand real educational equity and excellence, not the false promise of "school choice." Educational excellence requires excellent teaching and learning conditions: small class size and caseloads, adequate time to prepare and develop as educators, and compensation and respect to keep diverse, qualified, and experienced teachers in Oakland. Overwhelming evidence shows these conditions are necessary for quality schools, especially in low-income communities and for students of color.

### About Classroom Struggle

Classroom Struggle is a group of educators fighting to defend and transform Oakland public schools. We organize inside and outside our teachers' union and always strive to work with parents, students, and other OUSD staff. We stand against austerity and privatization of our schools. Come join with us in this struggle.

Facebook:

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