

# Classroom Struggle Newsletter - September 2017

## Will OUSD Stonewall Bargaining with Threat of State Takeover?

Just before OEA and OUSD began bargaining this year, the district declared a “budget crisis.” The last major fiscal emergency the district announced, in 2003, also came just as bargaining began. That time the state took over the district to “restore fiscal stability” but instead tripled the district’s debt before turning it back over to local control, a debt that continues to cost Oakland students \$6 million annually. The state’s Broad Institute-trained administrators also rapidly closed schools and opened many new charters.

Here we go again. Rather than consider OEA’s bargaining demands for reduced class size and caseloads and increased preparation time and pay, the district announced major cuts to student programs. Under pressure from OEA and community members, the school board came back with a plan claiming to “balance cuts between school sites and

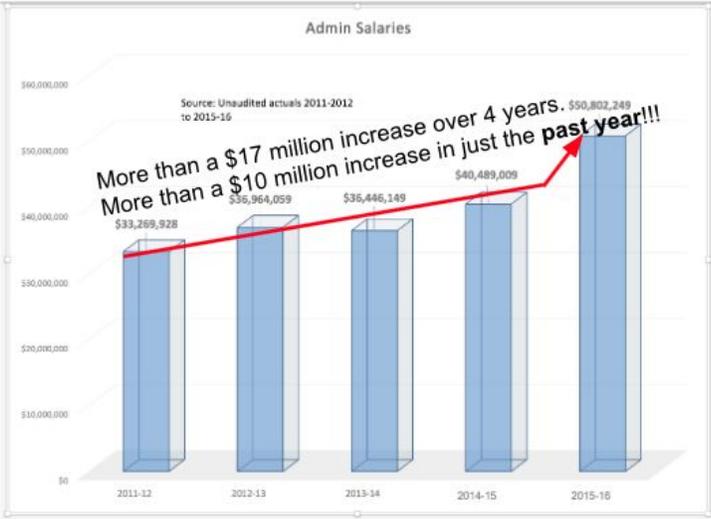
Rather than fire essential school workers, OUSD could close the \$17 million gap by reducing spending on administration to its 2011-12 level. If OUSD cut its rate of spending on administration and contracted services to the county’s median percentage for these categories, it could reallocate **\$55 million dollars** to programs and services serving students. Even a 2015 district-commissioned study reported that OUSD spends \$35 million less on students than comparable U.S. districts.

Last month the administration-friendly Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) issued its “Fiscal Health Risk Analysis” for OUSD. The report doesn’t even mention OUSD’s rate of spending on administration and contracted services that far outpaces all sixteen other Alameda County districts. Neither did its review of charter schools in Oakland—California’s most charter-heavy

district—raise any fiscal red flags. But FCMAT gave a negative rating to OUSD’s most recent collective bargaining agreements that began boosting its workers up from the bottom in Alameda County.

Great Oakland Public Schools is now promoting FCMAT’s report and warning that OUSD may again be taken over by the state if it doesn’t “make some very tough decisions around schools and programs.” We agree that OUSD must make “tough choices”: it must drastically cut spending on administration, consultants, testing, and other wasteful ventures and do what it takes to improve educational conditions.

The district and GO will continue their drumbeat threatening a new state takeover to justify refusing to bargain in good faith with OEA. We must not compromise our demands as the district stonewalls. Instead we must organize members and community allies, not only to resist even worse teaching and learning conditions, but to demand progress toward high quality schools for all students.



central office.” But the “central office” cuts don’t appear to touch administration and contracted services, on which OUSD spends far more than any other district in Alameda County. Instead they targeted layoffs for 67 full time equivalent positions for SEIU members and 17.4 AFSCME members.

**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 strive to work with parents, students, and other OUSD workers. We stand against austerity and privatization of our schools. Come join us in this struggle.

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