

**Oakland Special Education
Community Advisory Letter
2/14/2007**

To: Oakland Schools State Administrator & the Board of Education
From: The Oakland Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for Special Education

Re: Shortage of Speech & Language Services at OUSD

CAC's for special education are mandated by California State Statute 30 EC 56190 et. al.

The Issue: There is a significant shortage of OUSD Speech & Language Therapists. This includes the Augmentative Communication and Oral-Motor specialties. Most High School students are not receiving their legally mandated services. The low pay offered by OUSD, compared to surrounding districts, thwarts the ongoing recruitment efforts of Programs for Exceptional Student's staff.

Why this is important: Students not able to communicate effectively and without needed help will struggle unnecessarily in school and life. Because these services are required by Individual Education Plans, legal action under the Individual's with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) against OUSD is likely.

Findings:

1. Approximately 13% (273) of our students needing services are not receiving them.
2. OUSD widely employs contractors at up to \$100/hour to try and fill the gap.
3. OUSD offers significantly less compensation than other Bay Area districts and the private sector. After OUSD trains new therapists, they are often lured away to SFUSD. We cannot compete unless pay is increased.
4. There is a nation wide shortage of S&L Pathologists due to a variety of factors. Shortages are more severe on the West Coast.

CAC Advisory Notice to OUSD:

1. Act quickly and increase pay to the highest level of competing districts and the private sector. Other districts have put S&L therapists on the higher Psychologist pay scale to help address this problem.
2. As a further incentive, pay the annual professional license and certification fees required of many of our S&L staff.

Thank you for your attention to our concern.

Sincerely,

Sharon Jobson and Tom Donovan

Oakland CAC co-chairs

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