



Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network (PLAN)

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May 21 Forum on the Crisis in Public Education – Outcomes and Action Steps

On May 21, 2005, parents, community advocates, teachers, and administrators from 5 Bay Area counties gathered to share information, strategies, and mutual struggles to achieve equal education in this era of severe budget cuts and No Child Left Behind sanctions. In the forum we:

- Agreed on a Five-Point Education Platform, created based on input from hundreds of parents, teachers, and community members at a series of forums held over the past 9 months.
- Spoke out to a panel of decision-makers about their personal experiences and priorities for public education in the Bay Area. The panel – including Assemblywoman Loni Hancock, Rachel Richman from Assemblywoman Wilma Chan's district office, Amy Costa from Senator Don Perata's district office, as well as Dan Siegel, David Kakishiba, and Kerry Hamill of the Oakland school board – endorsed the platform, and pointed to specific legislation moving through the state legislature that support aspects of the platform.
- Signed a giant postcard to Governor Schwarzenegger, urging him to increase school funding, which was delivered to Governor during the May 25 Day of Action in Sacramento.



IT'S TIME FOR ACTION! The forum was an important first step to create a unified, regional voice on education priorities for low-income communities in the Bay Area. Download the Five-Point Education Platform and Legislation Fact Sheet and Action Steps! **Take action today!**

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS – MAY 21, 2005

PLATFORM DISCUSSION – THEMES

- Revenue measures needed -- restore higher tax rates for wealthy taxpayers
- More qualified teachers for special needs students
- Language access for parents and students whose first language is not English
- Parents should have meaningful input in selection of teachers, definition of quality
- 10-year plan to restore California education to top tier of states instead of near the bottom
- How can local communities work together to repeal federal NCLB Act?

OPEN TESTIMONY TO DECISION-MAKERS – THEMES

Impact of No Child Left Behind

- The NCLB forces teachers to be test-driven and does not measure the important things in life--we need more complete measurement
- NCLB allows private companies (tutoring, etc.) to make profit from school "failure"
- NCLB is punishing children. Why hasn't California joined the other states in resisting NCLB through class-action lawsuits?

School Funding

- Our children are the future – Gov. Schwarzenegger should restore Prop. 98 funding
- Art and music programs are vital to our children's education, and they are being cut
- We should fund education for our children, not war and prisons
- We need to make businesses pay their fair share of taxes

Diversity/Language Access

- Immigrant parents need more support, especially having access to translated materials so they can understand what is going on in their children's schools.
- We need a 10 year plan put into place to recruit teachers of color in our communities who will understand our children better.

PANELIST RESPONSES

Assemblywoman Loni Hancock (District 14)

- Supports California filing a lawsuit against NCLB
- Supports AB 9 (Coto) to support increases in per-pupil spending and AB 6 (Chan) to increase taxes on wealthy individuals.
- Needs our support to reexamine Prop. 13 and/or increasing taxes
- Needs support Democrats postponing budget action until a fair plan is reached

Assemblywoman Wilma Chan's Office (District 16)

- Support AB 6 (Chan) - to reinstate higher taxes for highest income individuals
- Support AB 680, language access for immigrant parents, enforces translation of translate school documents into other languages
- Concerned that there is no plan for 25% of children who flunked at high school exit exam
- Recommends mass participation in rallies like the May 25 Action Day, mass letters to the Governor to protest cuts.

Senator Don Perata's Office (District 9)

- Need to increase revenue to fund necessary services. Currently, any decision to increase education funding competes with social services funding
- Support SB 1x (Perata) to switch school funding formulas from Average Daily Attendance (ADA) to Average Monthly Attendance (AMA), which would better fund our schools
- Support SB 958 (Simitian) to give school districts more discretion in budgeting decisions
- Exploring possibility of lawsuit against NLCB.

Kerry Hamill, Board Member, Oakland Unified School District

- Meet with Congressman George Miller (one of the authors of NCLB) to get him to commit to changes to NCLB so at least unreasonable points are removed
- Public schools should nurture parent involvement and meaningful decision-making
- Supports investing in greater parent/community involvement in site-based budgeting.

David Kakishiba, Board Member, Oakland Unified School District

- On paper, California has very strong policies to support parental involvement in schools. We've seen how this translates at the community level, however.
- It will take massive grassroots organization to make changes happen in our schools.

Dan Siegel, Board Member, Oakland Unified School District

- School funding has become politicized, and the children who are being hurt are low-income and of color. Parents/community members need to increase advocacy efforts
- Supports increase in per pupil spending to national average
- Supports repeal of Prop. 13
- Supports overhaul of curriculum, with individual education plans for each student, appropriate progress measures, and effective curriculum for limited English students.