

THE SCHOOL WATCH

OPUSD Community Newsletter

Winter 2019 Edition

Oak
Park
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Illustration by
Vaishnavi Ramprasad

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Comes Together

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Tragedy Creates Common Ground

The article written below is by the Editorial Board of the Oak Park High School student's newspaper The TALON

Oak Park is in a time of healing. In the span of 24 hours, our community lost 12 lives at the shooting at Borderline Bar & Grill in Thousand Oaks, and many residents faced mandatory evacuations when fires threatened the communities of Oak Park, Malibu, Thousand Oaks, Calabasas, Agoura Hills and more.

The Oak Park community has been through an ordeal that many will not experience in their whole lives let alone over a couple of days. The Woolsey Fire and Borderline shooting have shaken our community, but have not dislodged our values. We are not defined by what we went through, but rather by what we have done to build support for a devastated community.

As survivors of not one, but two tragedies, we managed to come together, offering aid to strangers regardless of political affiliations, sexual orientation, religion, etc. Residents found ways to reach out and lend a hand in whatever way possible.

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Many residents created signs thanking first-responders for all of their backbreaking work. They have taken extra time to acknowledge the incredible actions of firefighters and continue to express their gratitude.

Both friends and strangers reached out to those whose homes were in jeopardy or lost, offering them a place to stay and food to eat.

Many local restaurants chose a day to donate all their proceeds to those affected by the fire, playing their role in the contributions to those affected and those who worked to save the homes of so many.

The Oak Park Unified School District created a GoFundMe page that raised over \$125,000 for students and families in the community who lost their homes. The school has continued to reach out to students who lost everything, offering them lunch, supplies, and support.

Oak Park has proven itself to be capable of rising above trivial matters that would otherwise divide us, to become a unified force for good. We must continue to show this kindness and comfort when tragedy occurs.

This human kindness is a powerful action, especially as we recover.

Elementary Schools Show Community Spirit and Strength after Woolsey Fire

Red Oak Elementary School

Red Oak's Student Council donated to the OPUSD GoFundMe Donation Drive to assist Oak Park families adversely impacted by the recent wildfires. The Student Council voted to give all of the money they raised by selling "Thankful Grams" in December to the District's GoFundMe campaign. The Student Council will sell "Thankful Grams" again in the spring as a way for students to act with kindness and acknowledge their appreciation of other students and staff.

Oak Hills Elementary School

Immediately after the Woolsey Fire, Oak Hills PTA coordinated and led a clothing and gift card donation drive. They reached out to retailers for a donation of items for this drive. Several volunteers helped them with donating as well as sorting the donations and creating care packages for the Oak Hills families. They coordinated the drive in a very compassionate and caring manner by personally reaching out to and offering families a private time to come and collect items which they liked.

Brookside Elementary School

While the month of November presented many challenges to our community, Brookside quickly began to rebuild and repair through teamwork, generosity, kindness, compassion, and gratitude. Brookside's community is an example of the power of a team and how grateful we are for this incredible school. On Monday, November 26th, staff gave students a heartfelt "welcome back" to campus. Students were greeted by "Team Brookside" with a high-five train and signs with positive messages to start their day. Once back on campus, students wrote letters to first responders and those in need and staff. Brookside will continue to support and encourage one another by being "bucket fillers" and finding ways to be kind! #OakParkStrong #TeamBrookside



It's Alive!

MCMS has a new inhabitant... and it's hungry. What do cost savings, cleanliness, and learning opportunities have to do with a metal monster? Everything!

OPUSD is pleased to be the FIRST school district in the United States to have an ORCA. So what is this thing? The ORCA converts food waste scraps into water by using a combination of highly-effective microbial mixtures and oxygen to break down food. Every day, hundreds of pounds of food waste accumulate at our schools. Instead of this food waste going into our trash cans, we can now feed our ORCA.

Less food waste reduces costs as fewer trips from the garbage company are required. Less food waste will also help us keep our schools cleaner and reduce the desire for rodents and birds to access our trash cans in hopes of finding an easy meal. Most importantly, the ORCA presents an incredible learning opportunity for our students. By diverting food waste from landfills, we are helping to reduce carbon dioxide and methane gas emissions.

You can learn more about the ORCA at <https://www.feedtheorca.com/>



Oak View High School Anacapa Wildlife Restoration Project

On October 25th, OVHS students embarked on a journey that had a significant impact on the Channel Islands National Park ecosystem. Over centuries, the Channel Islands have been used in a variety of ways. Anacapa, in particular, was once used to raise sheep. Natural species of plants that had existed on the island, creating habitats for the native birds, mice, and other animals, began to diminish. As those species of plants went away, so did much of the wildlife. Over the past three years, a Channel Islands Restoration began to use the seeds from the remaining plants to grow more plants to repopulate the island. By coordinating with this group, OVHS was able to help this project.

The trip began with a boat ride with the Island Packers. Students, staff, parents, and even OPUSD's Superintendent saw sea lions, dolphins, harbor seals, and a variety of seabirds. Upon arrival, students climbed a narrow

staircase up a steep cliff to arrive at an awe-inspiring bluff overlooking the ocean. The day was warm, calm, and pleasant – a perfect setting! Our group then met with project group leaders from Channel Islands Restoration and set off on a historical and natural history tour to see remnants of the past inhabitants of the island, old structures– including the lighthouse, and beautiful examples of the many native plants that live only on this island and nowhere else in the world. This was followed by a lesson about the native and endemic species of plants on the island and how they have been driven to near extinction.

Students planted hundreds of plants and learned about the history of the island's ecosystem. The lessons learned about the importance of preserving and restoring native species and the destruction by the introduction of invasive plants and animals were evident. By

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days end, the group was exhausted but sensed that they had contributed to something important.

As students left the island and boarded the boat home, the group could not resist looking over their shoulders at the plot of land that they had just helped to restore! It was a once barren area that was now plotted with tiny green plants. For some, this day was bigger than just a day on the ocean, it was a day that represented self-worth and community.



OPHS Girls Basketball Return to CIF Finals After Seven Years

The OPHS Girls Basketball team, under head coach Doris Park, have reached the CIF Division 4AA Final. Congrats to the coach and the team on a fantastic season!

Mental Health and Wellness Event - THRIVE

The first annual THRIVE Mental Health and Wellness Day took place at Oak Park High School Saturday, February 2, 2019. Through this event, we envisioned bringing valuable information to the community. Although it was pouring rain that day, we had an amazing turnout. We were so excited to have over 35 sessions on a variety of health topics for all community members and our surrounding school districts to participate in. We had several agencies including Engage Therapy, Luddington Institute and several others. Free childcare was provided by our extended care program staff Club Oak Park. The feedback we received via the event survey we sent out was excellent and we are thrilled to be able to put this event on next year! Although it is organized by the district and held at our schools, we want to make sure the entire community, district families and non-district families, are aware that this is for them! The information will help everyone in their lives, in their interactions with others in all aspects of life. We hope you come check out what THRIVE is all about next year. We look forward to seeing ALL of you!

THRIVE

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS DAY

PREPARING YOUR STUDENT TO THRIVE AS AN ADULT

Join us for a day of learning from experienced, licensed therapists, health and fitness experts, and social media professionals.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 9AM - 12PM | OAK PARK HIGH SCHOOL, 899 KANAN RD

Dr. Tony Knight Superintendent 9AM-10:30 An Introduction to THRIVE	Christopher Mulligan 10:00-10:30, 10:30-10:55 Understanding Video Game Addiction
Justin Ichikawa 10:00-10:30 Street Self-Defense For All Ages!	OPHS Peer Counselors 10:00-10:30 Advanced Peer Counselors Explain How They Support Their Peers on Campus
Michelle D Bellamy 9:00-9:30 Beginning Yoga/Core	Orangetheory Fitness (Orangetheory) 10:00-10:30 Basics of HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) for Fitness & How it Transforms Vitality
Melody Black, MFT 10:00-10:30 Bouncing Back: Raising Resilient Teenagers	Kasi Peters 10:00-10:30 Stress and Anxiety in Gifted Families
Rosanna Cairra 10:00-11:00 Transitioning to a Vegan Diet	Jennifer Reader/Dr. Samantha Tamburro 10:00-10:30 How Media/Social Media Can Affect Body Image and Self Esteem in Teens
Rich Cervantes 10:00-10:30 Vision Screening	Alyse Scamozzini, Psy.D. 11:00-11:30 Screen Time: What Every Parent Needs to Know
Lori Getz 10:00-10:30 Finding a Healthy Balance in a Digital World	Evan Simmons, LMFT 10:00-10:30 Anxiety: Healthy vs. Unhealthy
Corina Lorenzo 10:00-10:30 Volunteer in Policing - Finger Prints	Daniel Veselak 10:00-10:30 From Juul Heaven to Juul Jail: Vaping Made Simple
Devlin Markle 11:00-11:30 Top Ten Tips to Help Your High School Athlete	Audrey Walzer 10:00-10:30 Introduction to Mindfulness for Stress Reduction

QUESTIONS: Shaw McGowan at mcgowan@ophsd.org | RSVP: www.ophsd.org/THRIVE | FREE Daycare Provided Ages 5-12 in Room C-2

Budget 101

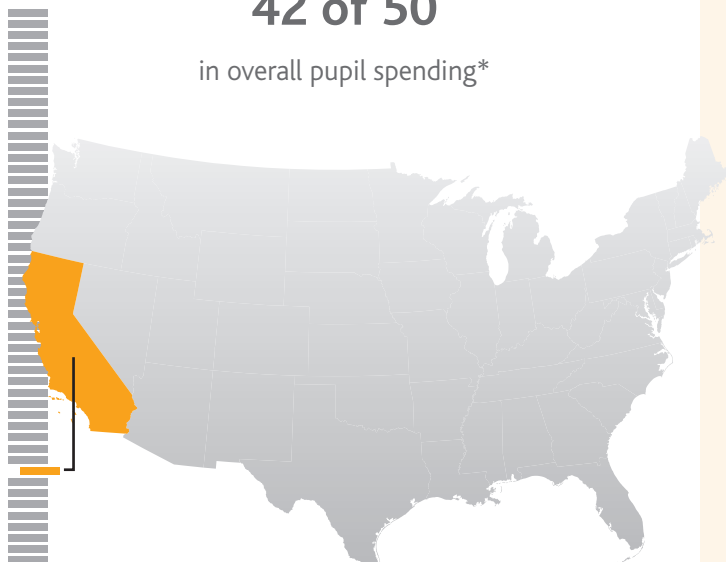
An Overview of the OPUSD 2019 Revenues and Expenditures

We are proud of our students and what they have achieved with the limited budget allocated to our District. Many parents and residents believe that a top performing school district, in an affluent area, in the state with the largest economy in the US, would receive all the necessary funding. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

Nationally, California ranks

42 of 50

in overall pupil spending*



*Education Week, 2018

In California, Oak Park USD ranks

869 of 994

in per-pupil funding

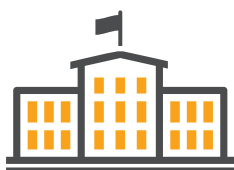
Out of nearly 1000 California school districts, OPUSD ranks in the bottom decile of per student funding, and ranks last among Ventura County districts.

Districts that serve higher numbers of students on the Federal Free/Reduced Price Meal Program, English Learners, and Foster Youth, receive significantly greater funding, up to 50% more, which has created a tremendous funding disparity among California school districts. With few of these students, OPUSD receives the minimum funding amount per student.

CDE LCFF
Funding Snapshot,
June 2018



Oak Park Unified School District



8 Schools



183 Classroom Teachers



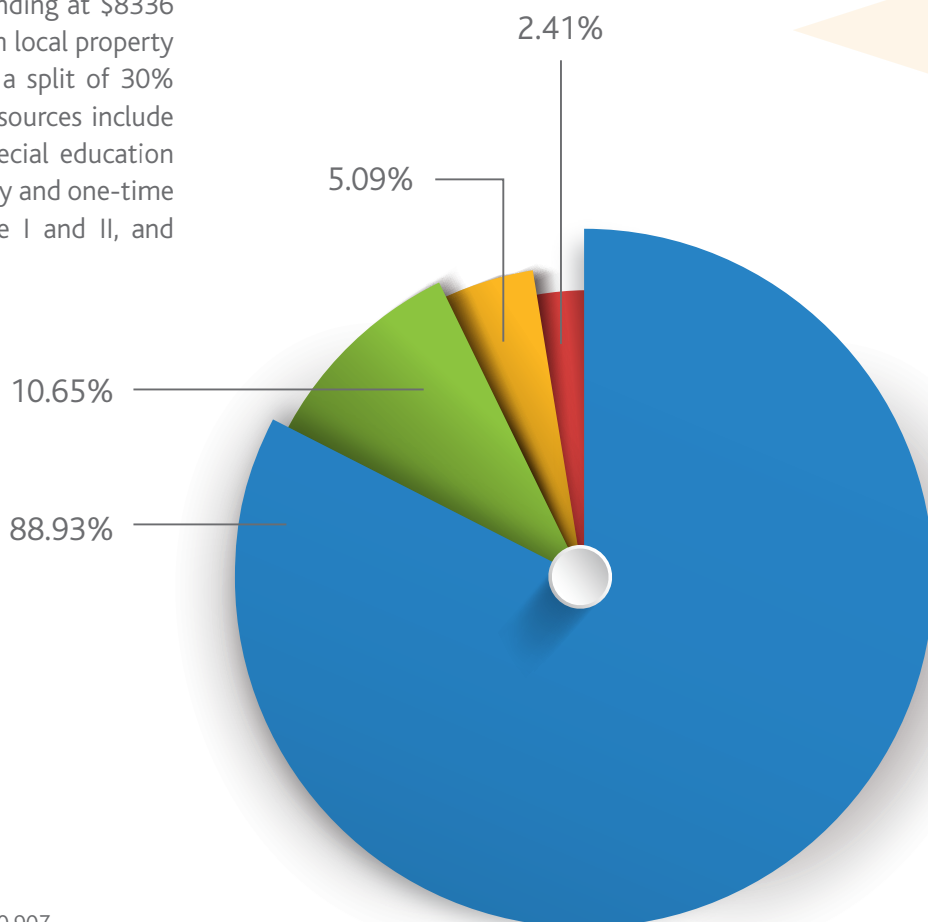
4,581 Students

Thank you for taking the time to learn about the OPUSD Budget. In the following pages, we will illustrate where our funding comes from, how we spend it, and some of the challenges we face.

Budget 101 (continued)

Where Our Funds Come From

LCFF provides OPUSD 83% of its funding at \$8336 per student, with \$2500 coming from local property taxes and \$5836 from the state or a split of 30% local and 70% state. Other funding sources include Other Local Revenue (donations, special education funding); Other State Revenue (lottery and one-time funding); and Federal Revenue (Title I and II, and special education).



Local Control Funding Formula	\$38,170,907	\$45,959,787
Other Local Revenue	\$4,573,145	
Other State Revenue	\$2,183,226	
Federal Revenue	\$1,032,509	

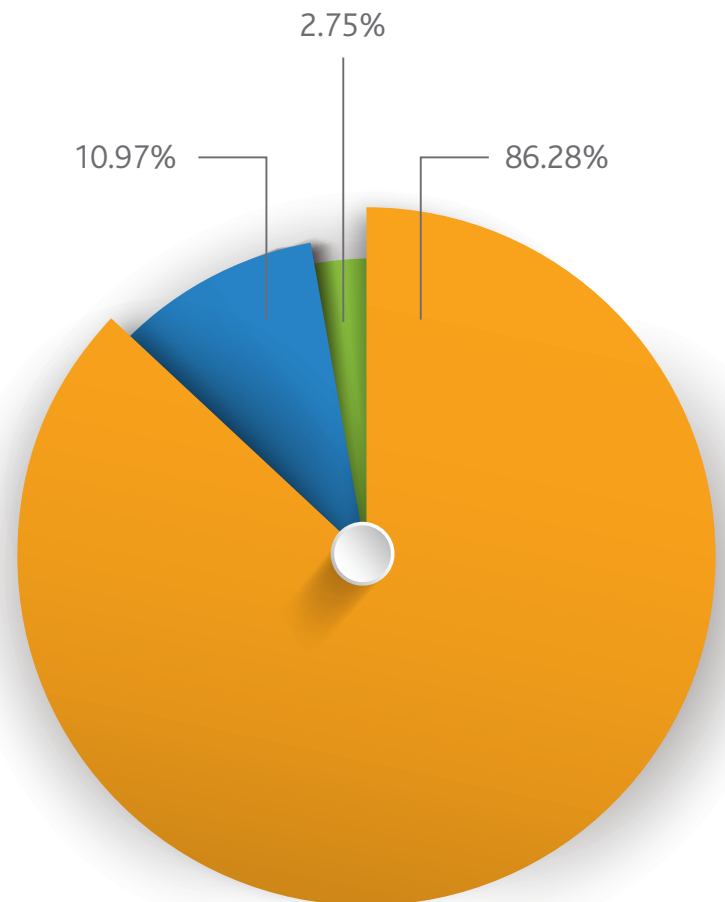
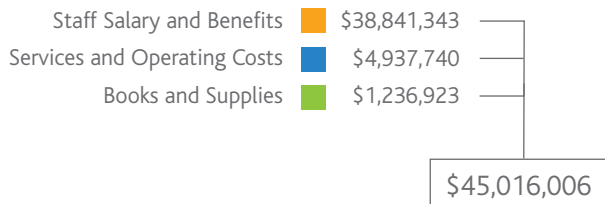
What is the LCFF?

Passed into law in 2013, LCFF is landmark legislation that fundamentally changed how all school districts in California are funded. All districts receive a base per pupil amount, but districts serving higher numbers of students on the Federal Free/Reduced Price Meal Program, English Learners, and Foster Youth, receive significantly greater funding, creating a funding disparity among California school districts.



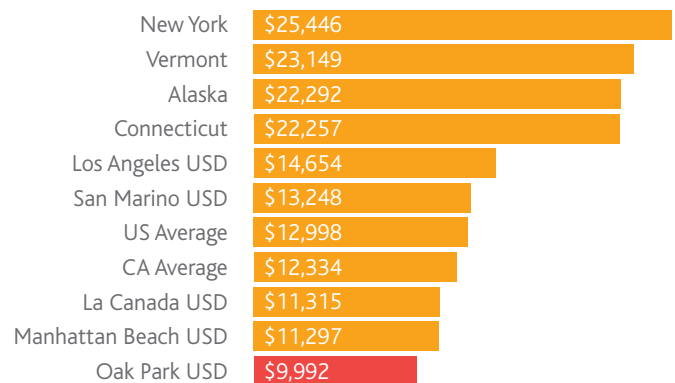
How We Spend Our Funds

Nearly 90 percent of the budget is spent on the salaries, benefits, and pensions of OPUSD's excellent teachers and supporting staff, and it is important to remain competitive to recruit and retain quality teachers. Challenges to the District's ability to meet this need include only modest cost-of-living adjustment revenue increases now that the LCFF funding target has been met. Also, rising pension costs are expected to triple over a 10 year period, reducing available LCFF dollars to be spent for students. The cumulative cost of this increase to OPUSD is expected to be in excess of \$4.5 million. All district programs are negatively impacted, as new dollars received are first earmarked to cover pension contribution increases.



Our Challenges

In 2016-17, the top ten states spent \$18,808 per average daily attendance (ADA), while California spent \$9,685 per ADA, a deficit of over \$9,000. California is failing to fund education commensurate with its status among the nation's wealthiest and most economically stable states. Some districts in California are able to bolster their funding and come closer to the national average in per-pupil funding by passing large parcel taxes and/or due to major support from their foundations.



Sources: US National Education Association April 2018, Revenue Per Student in Fall Enrollment 2017. California Department of Education, School Financial Services Division, www.ed-data.org. Per student amount includes LCFF revenues, federal revenues, and other state revenues per student (based on reported student enrollment).



OAK PARK EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The Oak Park Education Foundation's (OPEF) goal, as parents and community members alike, is to help enhance the programming and staff support for our school district by sourcing private funds.

We are pleased to report that OPEF is funding in excess of \$350,000 worth of programs for the current 2018-2019 school year. In response to your feedback, OPEF has chosen to address some of the most critical needs, impacting the most students.

Through 2/15/19, we have raised \$215,600! For those who have not given or wish to give more, we need your support in order to continue to these vitally important programs for your kids. Whether a one-time or monthly gift fits your needs, your donation directly impacts where it helps the most: Benefiting our children.



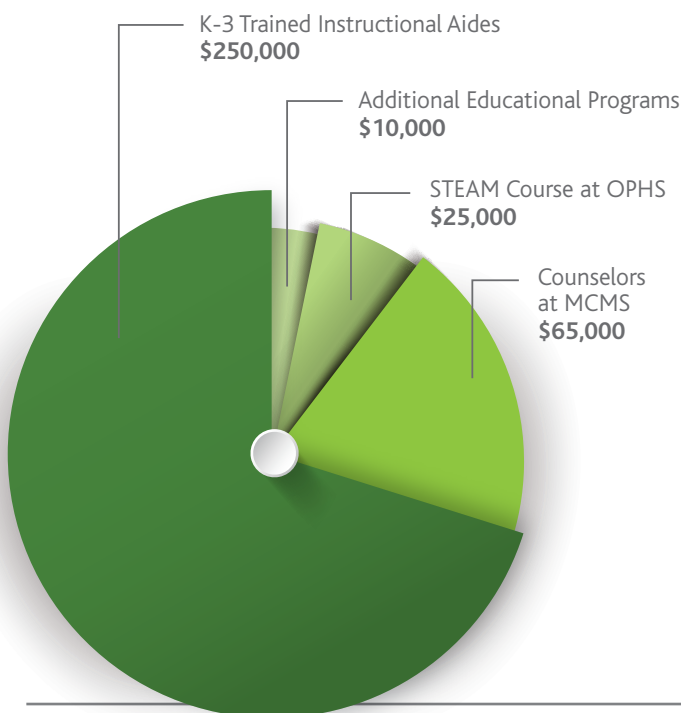
**OPEF is asking you to consider
a meaningful gift this school year
toward our \$350,000 annual goal.**

Our schools' level of EXCELLENCE requires
generous PHILANTHROPY!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

www.OakParkEducationFoundation.org/give/donate/

Gratefully,
The Oak Park Foundation Board



STAY CONNECTED WITH OAK PARK SCHOOLS.

OPUSD wants to connect with you! www.opusd.org

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