

Oakland Unified School District
1000 Broadway, Suite 300
Oakland, CA 94607

August 21, 2019

Dear Ms. Renteria, Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell, and OUSD School Board of Education Directors,

We are a group of Peralta Elementary School parents writing to make explicit our support for the potential merger between Peralta and Sankofa. Merging our schools could positively benefit students and families from both communities, and we are hopeful that OUSD will take bold, equity-driven action at this critical moment.

Because history, bleak financial projections, and concerned testimonials from Sankofa families are our guides, we do not believe OUSD can or will provide Sankofa with the resources it needs to effectively serve its current students. Because of gentrification, escalating housing prices, and an understanding of how privileged parents navigate school assignment systems, we do not believe Peralta in its current structure will ever serve a truly diverse student body again. These conditions and policies negatively impact all students in our community.

Therefore, we are writing to strongly urge you to prioritize a merger between these two geographically proximate yet resource divergent schools. In so doing, we request that you:

1. **Do what will be best for Sankofa's current students and families, based on their input and guidance.** If you make decisions based on what *other* families want, you will likely let those already in positions of privilege and power continue to shape the system to benefit their (and our) children at the expense of Sankofa students.
2. **Provide appropriate financial and human resources.** Merging Peralta and Sankofa is an effort toward greater racial and economic integration, and requires meaningful and significant resources to bring the school communities together and promote the best outcomes for all students. For example, teachers and staff

from both schools will need coaching and professional development to assist them in navigating the complexities and challenges of the merger.

3. **We urge you to reconsider the decision to split the schools across two campuses, and engage in a transparent conversation around the feasibility and trade-offs of the current proposal.** Merging schools is a complex and potentially traumatic process. In addition to adding complexity and uncertainty, creating a split campus could dilute the valuable human and fiscal resources that each school brings, reduce community cohesion, and increase frustration and resentment among families already ambivalent about the merger. Based on public discussions, a single campus merger could result in much higher buy-in from impacted families from both schools.

There are other concerns that we have, and that, should this process move forward, we would like to see addressed in the design phase. These include: establishing an attendance set-aside to ensure integration across race, class, and geography is maintained; hiring new teachers who can meet the needs of a merged school community; and ensuring that those most impacted are overly represented in planning and decision-making bodies related to the merged school.

Despite all of the difficulty, uncertainty, ambivalence, and tension that will continue to accompany this process, we believe it affords a small but important opportunity to address the great inequities that characterize OUSD's schools. Toward that end, we support this effort but ask that it be implemented in a manner most likely to lead to success, especially for students and families who have been farther from high-quality educational opportunities. If you do, we look forward to working with you to support the successful implementation of a Peralta/Sankofa merger.

Sincerely,
Cyrus Armajani
Jill Bond
Gillian Bowley
Ryan Brown
Kate Campbell
Chris Chun
Anne-Marie Despain

Molly Dickens
Raquel Maria Dillon
Kira Don
Patrick Driscoll
Will Evans
Lili Farhang
Cate Freyer
Jennifer Friedman
Ian Gordon
Kal Karn
Eleanor Katari
Gabe Kleinman
Jonathan Koltz
Chase Latta
Rachel Latta
Robin Leffert
Rachel Levy
Naybi Sansores Luna
Lisa Magged
Scotia Miller
Jonathan Osler
Eric Pankonin
Seema Patel
Seth Patel
Mike Pitler
Rachel Pomerantz
Mikaela Rabinowitz
Courtenay Morgan Redis
Ken Rice
Christa Robertson
Jarek Rudzinski
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Ian Whitmarsh
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