



Above: Crucible staff and faculty holding up signs reading “Dedicated Cru” (The Crucible’s Union Title) and “Cut Metal, Not Jobs!” in response to management’s layoff and reduction proposal.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 10/26/2026

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The Crucible Faces Abrupt “Temporary Closure” by Board of Directors

Closure of Treasured Oakland Arts Institution Leaves Employees, Students and Artists Uncertain of Future

WEST OAKLAND, CA – Staff and faculty of The Crucible industrial arts school are facing uncertainty after the school’s Board of Directors abruptly announced that the institute will be temporarily closed starting on Sunday, October 25th due to “serious financial circumstances”.

The closure comes as a shock to employees, students and the West Oakland community who rely on The Crucible as a valuable source of arts education.

Students enrolled in classes through the end of 2026 received the terse unsigned note on letterhead: "Beginning Sunday October 25th, The Crucible is temporarily closed, all classes, and events are cancelled until further notice." Ceramics faculty, Kaytea Petro worried about her students, "I'm two weeks into a long-form class, and poof, it's gone. My students got screwed and I have no way to help them."

A parent on Yelp stated that they had paid for a \$600 children's party, which was now apparently cancelled. "I don't know what to tell them," said David Banks, Program Manager for The Crucible, who has \$35k worth of teambuilds and events booked for in the next month.

The Crucible has faced financial insolvency in the past, and was in the process of rebuilding after the lengthy COVID shutdown and previous financial mismanagement. The organization has recently received over \$1.5M in grant support from the Kelson Foundation, the Hellman Foundation, The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation and individual donors to support the organization's financial stability.

The faculty and staff unionized in early 2026 as The Dedicated Cru, a part of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 57 in response to ongoing issues with management, and have been in contract negotiations since February 1st. The union staff, committed to The Crucible's long-term sustainability, has repeatedly offered concrete solutions for a roadmap to financial security—including staffing reductions at all levels of the organization, reductions in reliance on external contractors, and improved efficiencies within the physical warehouse. All suggestions by the union staff to date have been ignored, or rebuffed by management and the Board. Instead, management has pressed for reductions in community engagement, services, and classes – offering no hourly or salary reductions to non-union, non-public facing staff.

The bicycle shop, which offers free bike repairs to all visitors and primarily serves under-resourced West Oakland families and children, was quietly closed last fall; the staff now feel this was a harbinger of what they are facing throughout the organization now. West Oakland resident and long-time Crucible staff and faculty member LeDora Hightower said, "There are five housing projects around here and all the kids have flat tires on their bikes since the shop closed."

The Crucible joins CCA and Clay By The Bay as the latest Bay Area arts organization to be shuttered. Jewelry Department Head CJ Martinez said, "At least when we shut down for COVID, we had time to help our students get their tools and projects out of the building. This sudden action by the board is the messiest and most difficult way to take a pause." Because of the

sudden closure, most of the faculty, staff, volunteers and students have tools and projects locked away in the 56,000 sqft. building in West Oakland, during the busy season – leading up to the holidays and annual Gifty event.

The Crucible staff members remain confident that a solution can be found and The Crucible can find stable footing and they can continue to educate and inspire future generations of artists, makers, tinkerers, inventors, and anyone who wants to be creative.

About The Crucible

The Crucible first opened its doors on January 15, 1999, in a rented 6,000-square-foot warehouse in West Berkeley. In 2003, we moved to our 56,000-square-foot facility in West Oakland, and since then, have further grown our community-driven industrial arts programming, serving West Oakland and the Greater Bay Area.

As the largest nonprofit industrial arts education facility in the United States, we are committed to meeting individuals where they are, welcoming diverse voices, and using art to support creative exploration, personal transformation, and local economic development.

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