

A Question from the Floor of the OCO Education Forum:

In light of the fiscal crisis, many small schools are feeling threatened by conversations about consolidations and closures. We have had “small” schools serving students of higher SES status for decades. The schools feeling most threatened share campuses, a reality the small schools of higher SES populations don’t face. Are you committed to allowing these small schools serving communities we have underserved for decades to grow and sustain, potentially providing more funding to these schools?

Answers from School Board Candidates via e-mail:

Beverly A. Williams

Candidate for District 7

Yes, I am committed to preserving the status of small schools. If there are conversations about consolidations or closures of campuses it critical that small schools be included as an integral part of the equation. How can education exclude/overlook education! All students are entitled to quality education no matter what school they attend. Step outside the box and create, generate, develop, and spark innovative ideas to solve the financial crisis, the facility crisis, the materials crisis, the teacher crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Alice Spearman

Candidate for District 7

Thanks for providing me an opportunity to address the greater Oakland Community. To the best of my ability, I will answer this question.

I am committed to ensuring that Small Schools in the Oakland Unified School District receive what support is needed for them to continue to thrive and grow. This can be accomplished not only with district resources but with partnership support from the City of Oakland and Alameda County. This not only will require financial support, but we also must ensure that staff, parents and community are provided/supported with professional training, and the needed interventional services to be provided. To this end, if the local community wishes, the community small schools will grow and thrive.

Thanks so much.

Olu Oluwole Sr.

Candidate for District 3

Yes, if I'm elected as the school board director for district 3, I will commit myself to allow the small schools serving communities of underserved students to grow and sustain themselves. If they were consolidated back into larger schools, we then are going back to a system that is really leaving a lot of children behind, with inadequate attention and care, overwhelmed teachers, and schools with low morales. Closures also put significant burden, social and economic strain on parents, students, and the communities, by destabilizing community life.

To keep these small schools functioning, I will lobby for funding and resources from private sources and possibly outside the district in other more affluent communities. I will also work with the schools in developing fund raising activities that will be students generated, with parent and public participation and patronage. Thanks.

Brian Rogers

Candidate for District 1

I believe in small schools. I realize that in these tough fiscal times there have been discussions about whether all small schools can survive financially. I cannot promise that I will never vote to close or consolidate a small school, but I will, to the best of my ability, try to find the necessary resources needed to keep our small schools open. Through my work as an Oakland Small Schools Foundation Board Member for the past two years, I have helped nearly all of the small schools to find the extra funds that help pay for family resource centers, literacy specialists and extra tutors at the school sites. As a member of the Oakland Board of Education I will continue to do the same so that the small schools will be able to grow and sustain themselves.

Tennessee Reed

Candidate for District 1

My answer to this is no. The public schools are already in a major financial crisis and therefore should have the first priority when it comes to money. Also, the money needs to go to before and after school programs, healthy food and exercise and bringing the students up to the state standards when it comes to testing. The money really needs to go to the teachers and bringing in resources to schools in the hills.