

Oaklandvale School

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Dr. Kathleen M. Stanton
Principal

October 5, 2009

Dear Oaklandvale Families:

As you may recall, last year the Oaklandvale School was identified for *improvement* under the federal No Child Left Behind Act because we did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in language arts. This designation did not indicate a failing school. Rather it highlighted areas where work was needed by principal, teachers, and parents to ensure that all students are successful. The good news is our collective efforts to improve student achievement met with success because the Oaklandvale School **did** make AYP in language arts on this most recent round of MCAS testing (2009). In order to eliminate our status as *identified for improvement* we have to sustain our efforts and make AYP again in 2010.

Oaklandvale School offers a Title I program, which is a federally-funded program providing assistance to schools serving a certain percentage of students from high-poverty backgrounds. There are special consequences for Title I schools identified for improvement:

- 1) **In-District Transfers:** The staff at the Oaklandvale School already has a relationship with your child and wants to continue to serve your child all the way through the fifth grade. However, if you so choose, you may make a request to me in writing by November 1st that your children be transferred to the Lynnhurst or Waybright Schools in Saugus. Transportation would be provided. The Veterans Memorial School is not available for transfer because it is also designated as a school in need of improvement.
- 2) **Extra Professional Development Money:** The law requires that we use at least 10% of our Title I funds to provide high quality professional development to our staff.
- 3) **Comprehensive Improvement Plan:** Within 90 days, we are required to develop an improvement plan to remedy our achievement gaps. This includes: a full analysis of last year's results to find our areas of weakness, research-based methods to improve our performance, and ways to involve parents in the school's improvement process. Your input is an important component of this process as well, so I encourage you to attend our PTO meetings and School Council meetings.

Over the next few weeks, I will be working with the school and district community in designing this improvement plan. We also want to be sure that we are not just teaching to the test, but improving the overall quality of programs. We will continue to engage in the efforts that turned the tide of student achievement and implement additional new programs:

- **All Day Kindergarten (ADK):** This year the district opened seven sessions of all day kindergarten classes. With the restriction of time lifted, teachers are better positioned to

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expand the opportunities for kindergarten students socially and academically. As well, they will participate in art, music, and wellness (health and physical education) classes.

- **Intensive Student Tutor (IST):** We recently implemented DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). It helps teachers match the amount and type of instructional support with the needs of individual students to enable all students to become successful readers. This year, the Literacy Specialist has been partnered with a tutor who will work with the most challenged students in reading.
- **Statistical Analyst:** Once again, we will have access to a statistical analyst to provide detailed tracking and analysis of assessment results so we can use those results to inform curriculum, instruction and individual interventions.
- **Curriculum Meetings:** Over the summer, teachers completed curriculum maps in four major subject areas that align the elementary curriculum with the Massachusetts frameworks. We will continue to refine these guides, complete common assessments, and link them to curriculum in the middle and high schools.
- **Professional Development:** *Language Arts* –All Oaklandvale teachers completed two workshops aimed at developing an effective writing program for the elementary grades. They are committed to improving their students’ writing ability. The newly purchased cart of twenty-five net books means students can have their own mini laptop to create short stories, essays and personal narratives.
- **Textbooks:** Last year new language arts textbooks were purchased for all students in grades 4 and 5. This allowed for better teaching of vocabulary and specific comprehension strategies for our students. This year that same group of teachers received the new math program. Kindergarten teachers also have a new reading and math series. These programs are aligned with the Massachusetts frameworks and reflected in our curriculum maps.
- **Technology:** In the past two years, we have purchased SMART Boards that allow teachers to more fully engage students in interactive lessons across the curriculum. As well, we have added responders that allow teachers to use state-released MCAS questions with clickers (very similar to those used by the audience on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*) for individual and whole-class instruction and review.
- **Business Partnerships:** Prominent members of the business community joined together to enhance the educational opportunities of Saugus teachers and students – Saugus Business Education Collaborative (SBEC). Each year they sponsor a fundraiser, the Taste for Education that raises money for the schools. At the Oaklandvale School these funds will continue to pay for the *After School MCAS Prep sessions* offered in the winter.

Once we complete the improvement plan, I will communicate more specifically to you what weaknesses we found in our performance, what further steps we are taking, and what you can do to help. We are committed to serving your child and will use all the resources available to help our students achieve.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Stanton