



Claremont Middle School PTA

Oakland Unified School District

December 19, 2016

Jody London
Board Member, District 1
Oakland Unified School District
1000 Broadway, Suite 680
Oakland, CA 94607

Re: Selection of New Superintendent

Dear Jody:

I write on behalf of the Claremont Middle School PTA Board regarding the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Board's forthcoming selection of a successor for Superintendent Antawn Wilson. We believe it is imperative that the Board's selection process be broadened to include input from the larger community of stakeholders concerned with the direction of Oakland's public schools, including parents, students, teachers, and staff.

On Wednesday, the District announced that the Board had selected Deputy Superintendent Devin Dillon, Ph.D., as the interim superintendent. The selection of Dr. Dillon was completed without meaningful opportunity for input from the community, and foretells a similarly opaque process for the selection of a permanent replacement for Dr. Wilson.

Dr. Wilson's brief tenure at OUSD was marked by an unabashed devotion to charter schools that was consistent with his training at the Broad Academy and his experience at his prior post in Denver. During his time as Superintendent the number of highly-paid administrators working for the District increased at an alarming rate. This kind of increase in administrative cost is consistent with the experience of other jurisdictions led by charter school advocates; it should have come as no surprise to the Board, which understood Dr. Wilson's background and oversaw and approved of these high-priced administrators.

The selection of OUSD's next leader need not be a referendum on charter schools or administrative bloat, though the next superintendent's attitudes about such matters is plainly relevant. Dr. Wilson's proposals were routinely met with vociferous opposition from a broad variety of OUSD stakeholders, who disagreed with his vision



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and priorities. Whether Dr. Dillon will continue with the initiatives championed by Dr. Wilson, or pursue a new course, remains to be seen. The broader community of stakeholders would surely like to know. We believe it would be prudent to involve these stakeholders during the selection process in order to achieve as much consistency as possible between the community and the leadership of the District.

At this point it is not clear whether the Board intends to conduct a national search for Dr. Wilson's successor (as it did to identify him as a candidate), or if it intends to promote from within. Wednesday's press release stated in part that Dr. Dillon would serve "while a local search for a permanent replacement is underway."

Under any circumstances, the Claremont PTA joins those who have called for the Board to recruit candidates already familiar with Oakland's many challenges and many strengths. In this respect, we believe it is essential that the Board champion candidates who are committed to Oakland – not as a stepping stone to a more prominent position in another city, but as a destination to build and grow. While urban school district superintendents may have brief average tenures, we should not be satisfied with a superintendent that merely intends to hit this mark. Candidates with ties to Oakland and an abiding and demonstrated interest in our city are essential considerations.

Finally, the Claremont PTA Board urges the District to push for candidates who are fierce advocates of traditional public schools. It is time to put an end to the divisiveness caused by plans to expand the District's charter school profile. Charter schools will have a future in Oakland, but the Board does not need to be their champion. Nor does the Board need to hire a leader whose focus is on charter school innovation rather than traditional public school development and improvement.

We hope this letter is received in the spirit in which it is intended. We appreciate your service to the District and its students, but we hope you and the Board also appreciate the insistence among stakeholders to be involved in the selection of the District's next Superintendent.

Sincerely,

Christian Schreiber
Claremont PTA President