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## **Statement from the Oakland Unified School District on the "Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools List"** *For Immediate Release*

I am writing to provide an important update on the School Improvement Grant (SIG) process. I know the period since four of our schools were named to the State's "Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools" list – a designation we feel was both inaccurate and harmful – has been a difficult and confusing one. Like you, we have been trying to clarify a number of issues so that, together, we can decide the best way to move forward.

Many of the rules governing this process are unclear and since the list was issued, we have been addressing these concerns with the California Department of Education (CDE). Yesterday, the District participated in a state-wide teleconference with the CDE officials who are managing the SIG applications including the Deputy State Superintendent, Curriculum, Learning and Accountability. This enlightening conversation has broadened our view of the process and we want to share this new information with you.

The first and most critical point is that the School Improvement Grant process was characterized as a "grant opportunity". CDE officials indicated that at this time they are not developing legislation to mandate or monitor districts or schools that choose not to pursue this grant opportunity. Many throughout the state have been operating from the belief that schools districts and schools may receive sanctions or consequences for choosing not to pursue these funds, however, the recent conference call with CDE clarifies this issue.

Of course, there are valid reasons for school communities to consider proposing that the District pursue a SIG application on the school's behalf and we are not discouraging this. We are however asking school communities to include in their deliberations the pros and cons of whether or not to pursue this grant at this time.

We will continue to conduct community engagement to explore the issue from all sides and we request your continued participation in these meetings. We are looking to the community at each site for guidance because it is the families at each school who have the most at stake. We want this process to honor children and families and to result in a better understanding of your needs and what we must do in order to improve the prospects for our kids. For this reason, I continue to trust site leadership to facilitate the school community's reflections on the four reform models proposed in the grant as well as whether or not the grant itself should be pursued.

In order for this to happen, we must approach the process armed with open minds and as much knowledge as possible. We will continue to share information as it becomes available and hope you will freely provide your insight so we can make the best possible decisions for student and families.

**Every student. Every classroom. Every day.**