The Scoop

The Oakland Unified School District is proposing to change the calendar for the 2018-19 school year. A series of community meetings are scheduled to discuss the proposed changes. Parents and the community are also encouraged to complete a survey to express their opinions regarding the proposed changes.

Some of the Proposed Changes:
- Starting school on August 13th
- End school during the month of May
- Schedule the end of fall semester before Winter break

For more information and to complete the survey, go to the district’s website at www.ousd.org.

OUUSD Offers School Choice

For families with children in the Oakland Unified School District (OUUSD) or charter schools within the city, there is an enrollment option that puts school choice in the hands of the family. Open enrollment, also known as the “options system” was introduced in OUUSD schools in 2005. Through a lottery process, the program gives all children a fair chance of attending a high-performing school that might not be in their home neighborhood, thereby giving families greater flexibility selecting schools best suited to the needs of their child.

While all school have pros and cons, there are certainly schools that are a better fit for a particular child or family for a variety of reasons. The school could offer an exceptional program for an activity the child participates in or the dynamics of the student body or teaching staff may be a better fit. In some instances, one school’s location may make it ideal because of its proximity to available transportation or a parent’s job or childcare. Whatever the reason, the options system allows for greater control from the family.

All K-12 students are required to submit an application to attend an OUUSD school in the fall. Some OUUSD schools offer tours, open houses and fairs to help families choose the right school as part of the open enrollment process. Contact your schools of interest directly to see if they offer these events, or contact the OUUSD Student Welcome Center at enroll@ousd.org or call (510) 879-4600.

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Tara Banks, Guadalupe Guiza, and FCP Staff, Contributors

HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE SCHOOL OF YOUR CHOICE

OUUSD Schools: https://www.ousd.org/enroll
Open Enrollment: November 13, 2017 - January 26, 2018
Parent Notifications: Early March 2018
Deadline to Confirm/Appeal Offers: Late March 2018

OUUSD Public Charter Schools: https://enrolloak.org/
Open Enrollment: November 2017 through February 16, 2018
Lottery & Parent Notifications: March 5 - 9, 2018
Deadline to Accept/Decline Offers: March 29, 2018

What is a Charter School?
A charter school is a tuition-free public school that is privately-run. They are independent, but are authorized by a school district, county or state, which holds the charter school accountable for following the law and serving students. If you are interested in learning more about OUUSD charter public schools, visit: http://www.ousdcharters.net/ and http://enrolloak.org/

How to Check a School’s Performance

While deciding which school you’d like your child to attend, you can view the School Accountability Report Card (SARC), which includes information about a school’s demographics, class sizes, teachers, curriculum, safety, and more. Parents can request a hard copy of a SARC from the school, or view a school’s SARC online at: http://www.sarconline.org.
In 2017, staff at the Oakland Housing Authority participated in a series of trainings and workshops to help develop basic emergency response skills and awareness of what to look for when faced with potential hazards. With better preparation, staff could be of greater assistance to OHA residents if a major incident impacted our community. From knowing how to process urgent requests during a power outage to giving assistance in preparing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requests, helping families would be critical after a major event such as an earthquake or wildfires similar to those recently experienced in the North Bay Area.

While OHA staff is here to help, we encourage families to take precautions. FEMA has two key recommendations for every household:
1) have an Emergency Supply Kit, and
2) prepare a family emergency plan.

Please read the cut-out section of this issue of OUR Voice for greater detail.

The holidays are generally regarded as a time of joy and sharing. While everyone may not have the resources to create celebrations filled with lavish gifts, we can all use the warmth of the season to come together and let those closest to us know how much they mean. In addition, homemade gifts, handwritten notes of thanks, kind gestures and public service are other ways to make the holidays feel special without breaking the bank.

If you need support over the holidays or desire to learn more about local toy drives and other holiday events please visit the FCP webpage at www.oakha.org or call (510) 587-5115.

When You Miss a Day of School - You Miss Out

OHA’s Family and Community Partnerships department (FCP) works year-round to support families with their efforts to make school a priority. Members of FCP’s team recently joined in a collaborative with Attendance Works, a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that attendance plays in achieving academic success starting at early childhood education.

“Chronic Absenteeism” is not truancy. Chronic Absenteeism refers to the amount of school days a student misses for any reason, excused or unexcused. In the case of Oakland Unified School District, it means your child is missing 10% or more of the school year (18+ days). Children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the 3rd grade, and students who cannot read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade are four times more likely than proficient readers to ultimately drop out of high school.

Missing school is a problem that affects children of all ages, grades and socio-economic backgrounds. Children miss school for a variety of reasons, some of which are unavoidable, like illness; however, absence from school is often easily avoidable. Some families remove their children from school days early for holiday travel during this time of year, while others might extend summer or other vacations to take advantage of non-peak travel periods and discount prices, or simply because they want to avoid crowds or spend more time with grandma on the other side of the country.

Children who miss an excessive amount of school are at a distinct disadvantage. If the pattern carries from year to year, there may be significant negative impacts on the child’s academic progress, social development and even their lifelong earning potential. [The average high school dropout can expect to earn an annual income of $20,241, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That’s a full $10,386 less than the typical high school graduate, and $36,424 less than someone with a bachelor’s degree.]

The reasons for chronic absenteeism is as multifaceted as our students and families, including poor health, limited transportation, and bullying, or a lack of safety; which can be particularly severe in disadvantaged communities and areas of poverty. National data suggest that one in 10 kindergarteners misses a month of school every year. These rates rise during middle and high school as excused absences or simply cutting classes, increases.

Contact FCP for additional resources to help you manage a student’s attendance at (510) 587-5115.

Seasonal Jobs!

Everyone can use extra cash during the holidays. If you’re interested in getting seasonal work, now is the time to apply. Most retail stores hire extra staff to accommodate the growing crowds during the Holiday Season. If you need assistance in searching and applying for retail jobs or other seasonal work, please contact FCP at (510) 587-5115.

Use online job search sites like Indeed.com or Monster.com and enter keyword: “seasonal”
Success Stories

Congratulations are in order for Merlennet Riley, an OHA resident who successfully completed the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program within the program’s allotted five years. Through the FSS program, offered by FCP, participating residents are able to get support as they work toward long-term goals, while also saving money that can ultimately be used for the purchase of a home, starting a new business, extending their education or for other approved uses.

In addition to graduating from the FSS program, Ms. Riley recently secured a full-time position with the City of Berkeley as a Mental Health Specialist all while pursuing her Bachelor of Arts in Leadership with a minor in Behavior Health Science. She is scheduled to complete the program at the end of this year.

Ms. Riley also worked as a Resident Intern at OHA where she provided supportive services and resources to the residents for several months. She is on the path to success in every aspect in her life. Way to go Ms. Riley!

RESOURCES

As we approach the California Primary on June 5, 2018, voter registration is very important for you, your family and your community. As the former Speaker of the Unit-ed States House of Representatives, Tip O’Neill, famously said, “All politics is local.” By this he meant that we often focus so much on the bigger races, like the presidency that we overlook some of the issues that have the most impact on our day-to-day lives. When we dismiss races like city council, school board, or other local propositions, we may be limiting our own voices on the things that matter most (like jobs, school, wages and taxes). Make local voting a priority.

GET INFORMED, GET INVOLVED AND GET REGISTERED TO VOTE.
California Secretary of State
http://www.sos.ca.gov/
Alameda County Registrar of Voters
http://www.acgov.org/rov/

YOUR VOICE

Q: Can non-US citizens live in OHA-subsidized housing?
A: Housing assistance is available only to individuals who are U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals (herein referred to as citizens and nationals), or noncitizens that have eligible immigration status. At least one family member must be a citizen, national, or noncitizen with eligible immigration status in order for the family to qualify for any level of assistance. HUD regulations prohibit the provision of subsidy to ineligible family members. However, families that include eligible individuals and noncitizens with ineligible immigration status are considered mixed families. Mixed families are given notice that their assistance will be prorated based upon the percentage of family members that actually are eligible.

If you would like to submit a resident success story or have an idea for an article for our next issue, please email your information to ohacommunications@oakha.org.

RAB Blog

The OHA Resident Advisory Board (RAB) would like to encourage all residents to attend a board meeting. The RAB provides residents with a forum to share, learn, and discuss matters that are relevant to community members. It also provides an opportunity for residents to learn about the OHA Annual Plan and discuss policies that impact the entire OHA community. If you believe in the availability of quality affordable housing and wish to support the OHA community, the RAB is for you!

RAB meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, from 5:00pm to 7:00pm, at 1619 Harrison Street. The meetings are open to the public. Dinner and transportation assistance are provided for each meeting. If you have any questions or are interested in participating, please call (510) 587-5129.

RAB’S MISSION STATEMENT
To ensure that OHA Public Housing Residents and Section 8 Participants actively participate in the decision making process regarding OHA policies and procedures and are actively engaged in their community as leaders.
It's Never Too Early to Prepare for College

While you don’t need college to become a well-rounded individual, it does put you in proximity to others who share similar interests and opens avenues to travel, international studies and internships and career options.

Through middle and high school, extracurricular activities such as music, specialty clubs, sports etc. are also important as they help you refine your interests and improve in areas of special skill and aptitude. Additionally, there are millions of dollars available for academic and specialty scholarships and having a relationship with organizers of all these activities will be beneficial.

For middle and high school students, parents can assist their child by making sure they are on track in their academic requirements to move from one grade level to the next. Middle schoolers should focus on developing strong study habits that will be used as preparation for high school.

That preparation also includes having good reading and math skills, so the students can potentially take honors and advanced placement classes in high school. These classes help students will help them prepare for college level work. While in high school make it a point to visit as many local universities and colleges as possible. They all have special days for families to visit their campuses to experience their university first hand. These events are packed with fun and useful information about the campus and college life.

At the high school level, it is important for parents and students to know:

- the graduation requirements (including UC and CSU specific requirements)
- how to read a transcript
- when SAT and ACT college placement tests are given.

Parents and students should request a copy of the student’s transcript at least once a year during high school. By doing so, families can determine which path to college their student should take and what coursework would be optimal for the student. Parents and students should contact their school counselors at least twice a year to discuss educational goals and college preparation and then again, when it is time to begin the college application process.

Many of our local colleges and universities have special cultural events, galleries and programs that are great ways to introduce students to college. Some even host special days, like Cal Day at UC Berkeley, for families to visit and experience free lectures, performances and tours that showcase campus programs and student life. The next Cal Day will be Saturday, April 21, 2018 and is a great place to get your children acquainted with and inspired to go to college.

Family Emergency Plan:

Disasters/emergencies can strike quickly and without warning. To ensure the safety of all family members, it is important to have a Family Emergency Plan.

Below are some of the recommendations from the American Red Cross for your family’s Emergency Plan:

- Families should discuss and practice escape routes from their home.
- Have an agreed upon meeting place in the neighborhood in case family members are separated during an emergency.
- A second meeting place outside the neighborhood should also be designated in case the first place isn’t accessible.
- Designate an out-of-town family friend or relative as an emergency contact and have that person’s contact information.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in the home and test regularly.
- Ensure child’s schools have current emergency contact information.
- Discuss with all family members the type of emergencies that are most likely to occur in this area (earthquakes, fires...), and the proper safety responses.
- Ensure that child’s know how to call 911 and emergency services and memorize a family member’s contact information.
- For more information on emergency preparedness, please see the websites for the American Red Cross – www.redcross.org and FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) – www.fema.gov.

PHADA Scholarship Application 2018

The PHADA scholarship program will award three scholarships to deserving youth currently residing in PHADA member agencies. Last year, an OHA resident was awarded a scholarship. The resident received the $7,000 Stephen J. Bollinger scholarship. A child in your family could be next!

FCP will host two scholarship information sessions in early November. Please contact FCP for dates, times and locations.

We encourage all high school graduating seniors to attend. Register by calling (510) 587-5106.
Public Service After High School

As many seniors begin to plan for life after high school, they are likely to encounter military recruiters on campus who push to increase the number of enlistees. Because the draft was abolished in 1973, the military has come to rely on volunteers to serve. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 states that schools receiving federal funding are required to give the military the same access to students that colleges and career counselors have. This includes personal contact information for students, which parents can request not be shared with military recruiters.

“Be All You Can Be” is how the U.S. Army markets itself and “The Few, The Proud,” is used by The Marines recruiters, who often frame military service in terms of students’ futures or aspirational goals. They discuss how the military can help pay for college and learn necessary skills for career development. In exchange for a certain number of years of service, students can earn money for college as well as college credits. The Army also offers career training in many fields, including medicine, law, aviation, and computer programming. These can be very good options leading to admirable service, but there are also down sides that may or may not get as much attention.

Students might be intrigued by the benefits, adventure and travel associated with the military, but it’s important to keep in mind that the military can be dangerous. Soldiers who are deployed are at greater risk for major health concerns ranging from physical to psychological. Some common conditions that soldiers return home with include PTSD and permanent injuries/pain brought on by training or battlefield conditions.

After high school graduation, there are many ways, in addition to the armed services, to serve our country and community through public service. For instance, AmeriCorps is a federal program that allows individuals to serve in communities around the country while offering perks such as student loan deferment and access to career opportunities. Learn more at www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps.

Holding on for Hope

With recent news reports about severe weather events, terror attacks and cultural differences exploited on social media intended to inflame tensions between neighbors and friends, it’s no wonder people feel increased weight on their shoulders. Add to that, our own personal concerns like managing work, raising children and making ends meet can all feel like too much. If adults feel this way, imagine how our children might feel, who often see the same negative images, are victims of hostilities online and in real-life, and who have the added challenge of navigating adolescence and school.

Studies show that children are just as susceptible to depression, stress and feelings of despair as adults but many don’t have the resources or experience to know how to persevere until conditions improve. For high school students who experience pressure from family, teachers, coaches, peers and their community, there may be pressures that parents don’t realize are reaching a dangerous level. All too often children (and adults) don’t see all the alternatives or resources available to them and they choose suicide as a way out. Suicide is not the answer.

According to the CDC, “suicide was the third leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10 and 14, and the second leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 15 and 24.” What’s more alarming is that one in five teens in the U.S. consider suicide each year.

While suicide is difficult to predict and the reasons teens attempt suicide are complex, it is preventable. Knowing some of the warning signs can help you identify what might be cause for concern. Some of these include:

- Changes in behavior: exhibiting poor judgement, acting erratically, insomnia
- Lack of social support: feelings of isolation from friends or family
- Changes in personality: becoming withdrawn, sad, anxious, or apathetic
- Talking about self-harm: this includes talking about dying or disappearing
- Feelings of hopelessness: believing that things will not get better or change

If you notice these signs, it’s important to reach out to your child and communicate openly. Take their concerns seriously and be there for them, listening to their thoughts and feelings. Express your support for them, and reassure them that it’s okay to seek help. Also, remember to take your own advise if you are overwhelmed by the stress in your own life.

NOVEMBER
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DECEMBER
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11/10/17 Veteran’s Day
11/16/17 Holiday Splendor
11/23/17 Thanksgiving Day
11/24/17 Day after Thanksgiving
12/20/17 OHA Toy Drive
12/25/17 Christmas Day
12/26/17 Kwanzaa begins
12/31/17 New Year’s Eve
01/01/18 New Year’s Day
01/15/18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
02/14/18 Valentine’s Day
02/19/18 President’s Day
03/17/18 St. Patrick’s Day
04/02/18 Cesar Chavez’s Birthday
04/22/18 Earth Day

JANUARY
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Visit the Board of Commissioners web page for Board meeting schedule, agendas and minutes at http://www.oakha.org/boc.html

Save the Date!
24th Annual Oakland Earth Day
Saturday, April 21, 2018
Join your neighbors to clean and green Oakland!
Groups and individuals of all ages and abilities are invited to join cleanup and restoration projects at creeks, parks, and neighborhood sites throughout Oakland. All tools are provided.

http://www2.oaklandnet.com