



# Oak Park Elementary School District 97

## Committee for Legislative Action, Intervention and Monitoring (C.L.A.I.M.)

### A Committee of the School Board of Oak Park District 97

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#### THE IMPACT OF FUNDING DECISIONS ON DISTRICT 97

##### Introduction

The Committee for Legislative Action, Intervention and Monitoring (C.L.A.I.M.) is charged by the Oak Park District 97 Board of Education to advocate for government policies and legislation that support our local efforts to provide every student with a high quality education. One area of our focus is legislation that places an unfair financial burden on school districts.

For the 2011 to 2012 school year, District 97 employed 457 full-time teachers, 47 administrative and support staff, 200.5 non-certified staff, and an additional 11 part-time teachers – over 715 individuals. These employees served a total of 5,579 students in 10 different schools. District 97 is known for its relative diversity, and the numbers support the reputation: approximately 23% of students are African American, 4.65% are Asian, 5.22% are Hispanic, 0.12% are Native American, 57.28% are Caucasian, and nearly 10% are multiracial.

##### Local Burden

District 97 not only provides exceptional – and exceptionally important – services to our children, it is also a major economic engine and source of employment for our region. When costs are shifted to the District, however, its level of service and the local economy are threatened. Class sizes necessarily increase as the District has less money to spend on teachers, and the local taxpayers are forced to choose between a worse education for the community's children or an even higher tax burden. In 2012, 74.88% of District 97's revenue will come from local taxes – that is \$63,005,250 paid primarily by homeowners in a town without manufacturing or any significant corporate tax base, and which recently incurred a 3.8% property tax increase pursuant to the District's 2011 referendum.

##### Pension Reform

If the pension funding burden is transferred to the District, it will cost the community dearly. For every 1% of teacher salaries that the District has to pay to fund the pension, the District loses over \$330,000 that could be spent on instruction – the equivalent of 4.75 full-time teachers.<sup>1</sup> If the full pension burden is transferred to the District, it would cost the equivalent of over 44 full-time teachers. That is equivalent to all of the teachers at any one of the District's elementary schools.

##### General State Aid

General State Aid set below the mandated level takes its toll on the District as well. General State Aid is currently paid by the State to the District at only 89% of the full funding level. By failing to fully fund General State Aid for the 2012-2013 school year, the legislature is costing District 97 over \$1,000,000. That is equivalent to 14 teachers – fully half of all of the District's third grade teachers.

##### Mandated Programs

When programs are mandated but not funded, District 97 has to reallocate funds from other programs to pay for the mandated programs. English as a second language and bilingual instruction currently costs the District nearly \$900,000. The State provides \$19,000 for these mandated programs. That funding shortfall costs the District the equivalent of 12 teachers. These programs are important, but if the State is going to dictate how these programs are run, it should also ensure that they are fully funded.

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<sup>1</sup> The average teacher salary in Oak Park District 97 is \$55,000, and the average cost of benefits per teacher is \$15,000

