Oakland Community School Expands Services to Youth

(Oakland, Calif.) — The Oakland Community School (OCS), one of the most influential educational institutions in the state of California, began its sixth year of quality, innovative education here on Monday, September 13, with an expanded curriculum designed to better serve its 150 predominantly Black and poor students.

Fresh from the three-month summer vacation, OCS students — many of whom are new to the School — are starting the year off not only with an enlarged curriculum but with a freshly painted and beautifully redecorated building, the product of long hours of hard work voluntarily donated by parents, staff members and other supporters of the popular model East Oakland school. There was a feeling of excitement and anticipation as the children settled down for what promises to be a challenging school year.

In past years, OCS students, ages 2½ to 11, were organized into eight groups. That structure has been changed this year, however, with the creation of 12 levels that allow the School to expand its curriculum into secondary education.

Providing some insight into why the curriculum has been enlarged, OCS Director Ericka Huggins explained that last year an eight-year-old boy attending the School excelled in mathematics, performing on a high school level. Since he was too young to go to high school but had the ability to do some high school work, the OCS staff began to see the need for an expanded curriculum.

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The Children’s Classroom.

The 35 OCS staff members—both paid and volunteers—come from all over the country, many having given up higher-paying jobs because of their commitment to the kind of education the School provides. They are more than teachers: they serve as friends and counselors to their students and totally join with the children in the learning experience, a unique experience that children everywhere deserve.

The children of the Oakland Community School exhibit a closeness in work or at play that is seldom found in the public school system.

**OAKLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

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need for creating a new curriculum structure to meet his needs and those of others like him.

The 12 levels—1 through 3, preschool; 4 through 6, primary; and 7-12, secondary—provide a milieu where children who excel in a particular area can receive the specialized instruction they require. Other children then, are not pressured to perform beyond their abilities. A 10-year-old child may be in Level 11’s mathematics class but in Level 8 for instruction in Language Arts.

In this way, the overall educational goal is achieved—enabling the children to learn at their own rate of speed, a situation almost totally lacking in the highly competitive atmosphere of the public school system. (See next week's issue of THE BLACK PANTHER for details on the OCS curriculum.)

**STOREFRONT BUILDING**

Since it first opened in a storefront building with 25 students in January, 1971, the OCS has steadily strengthened its educational program. Today, it is a source of inspiration for educators who come from throughout the state and across the nation to view the School as well as nonprofessional people anxious to start a similar program in their own communities. The OCS is so highly respected in the community that already there is a waiting list of over 100 children.

Besides its model approach to education—focusing on teaching the children how to think, not what to think—the School provides three free meals a day, free medical care and clothing for those who need it. Classes include Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Art, Music, Physical Education and Environmental Studies. Field trips are a vital part of the School's curriculum, in line with the OCS motto, “The World Is