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## Letters to the editor

Vote Yes on Measure Z

My family moved to Orinda over 40 years ago so we could send our children to Orinda's excellent schools. I was proud to give back to this community by serving as mayor and on the school board. My son now serves on the Acalanes High School District Board of Education. The level of funding Orinda schools receive from the State ranks among the lowest out of over 1,000 California school districts. We have been able to sustain our excellent schools despite inadequate state funding through exceptional volunteerism in our schools, strong local fundraising and the generosity of the community.

However, inadequate state funding is having a detrimental impact on our schools as more and more of our talented teachers leave for other school districts offering more competitive compensation. It's no secret that having a qualified and experienced teacher in the classroom is the most important element of a quality education.

While I no longer have children in Orinda schools, I am enthusiastically supporting Measure Z to provide locally controlled funding that must stay here in Orinda to attract and retain excellent teachers, support quality academic programs and maintain manageable class sizes.

Measure Z includes strict fiscal accountability protections to ensure funds are spent properly. No funds can be used for administrator salaries and an independent citizens' oversight committee will monitor all spending. Measure Z automatically expires in seven years and cannot be renewed without voter approval. An optional exemption is available for senior citizens on fixed incomes who feel they cannot afford the cost. Measure Z requires 66.7% support to pass, so we need Orinda to once again come together to support our students, our teachers and our schools! Even if you're like me and no longer have school-age children, please join me and vote Yes on Z by March 7.

Sue Severson

44 Year Orinda Resident, Former Mayor and OUSD Board Member

Teacher compensation and Measure Z

I have taught in Orinda schools for the past 25 years and I am also the proud parent of a 6th grader at OIS and a 4th grader at Wagner Ranch. Like many of us, I moved back here for Orinda's world class schools. However, I am increasingly seeing outstanding teachers leaving our school district for more competitive compensation in other school districts. I know Orinda teachers who have second or even third jobs and commute from faraway because they cannot afford to live nearby. The level of state funding Orinda receives is among the lowest in California and our schools are struggling to compete for the talented teachers that are essential for delivering quality education.

In the coming weeks we have an opportunity to ensure Orinda can attract and retain great teachers, support quality core academic instruction and keep class sizes manageable by voting Yes on Measure Z by March 7. Measure Z provides locally controlled funding directly to Orinda's elementary schools and intermediate school to make our schools less dependent on Sacramento for funding.

We can't expect the outstanding quality of our local schools to continue at the level we've come to expect if we keep losing talented teachers to schools in other communities. Please join Orinda parents, teachers, elected leaders and many others in voting Yes on Z by March 7.

Leslie Millstone

25-Year Orinda Teacher and OUSD Parent

Help teachers with Yes vote on Measure Z

As a local realtor, I can assure readers that the No. 1 reason families move to Lamorinda is for our highly rated public schools. The quality of our schools is inextricably linked to buyer demand for homes, and thus our strong property values. Current Orinda homeowners - even those without students enrolled - should take school quality seriously and vote YES on Measure Z to improve teacher salaries and keep our schools on the "excellent" list.

Readers may not know that Orinda schools are almost DEAD LAST in California in terms of state funding. Because of this, OUSD teacher salaries are no longer competitive. Orinda is losing experienced educators to nearby districts with higher pay, and this will erode the quality of our schools in time.

If passed by voters, funds from Measure Z will raise salaries to keep great teachers in Orinda. Voters in Moraga, Lafayette, Walnut Creek and Piedmont have passed similar measures, and I hope Orinda will show the same support for our educators and students.

Like everyone, I don't like it when a new line item appears on our property tax bill, but Measure Z is more than a tax - it is an investment in our children, our teachers, our community and also our property values for years to come.

Please join me in voting YES on Z before March 7.

Hillary Murphy

Local Realtor, ONE Platinum Sponsor and OUSD Parent

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[back](#)

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