

The Explorer

SPRING 2009



OAKLAND INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL



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Student Spotlight

Of the 200 students at OIHS, 11% percent with UN refugee status emigrated here from Bhutan, a country in the eastern Himalayans bordered by India and China. Indra Karki's story below illustrates the lifelong struggles that our families have endured before they arrived in Oakland. Indra shared his family's story with Principal Carmelita Reyes:

More than 400 years ago, the ruler of Bhutan asked the king of Nepal to send families to Bhutan who could construct a Buddhist monastery. Nepalese have lived there ever

since. Just before I was born, the northern Bhutanese government turned against my people. Our language was banned, and they did not want us to live there anymore. After the government killed some of our people in a political movement, my family moved to the refugee camps in the Asian part of Nepal. Our family lived in the camps for 17 years, and I was born there.

At the Goldsap camp, we had school in the forest under the trees. There, I began to learn English. Later, a bamboo school was built. A year ago, the United States government said they would allow Nepali refugees to move to the U.S., but we were not sure if this was true. Just before we left for the U.S., our camp burned down, and we lived for two months in the forest. The fire is the reason some of the refugees do not have report cards to show the school. My family was called and chosen to go to the U.S., and they took our fingerprints and gave us health exams. We flew on a plane to Katmandu, then Abu Dhabi, New York, Dallas, and finally to Oakland.

There is a very vast difference between school here and in Nepal. I never saw a computer before in a school, and before coming to the U.S. I saw only one computer in my whole life. Now, I can use ATM cards, search websites, and type reports for science class. In this school, nothing is difficult. Everything is good, the teachers are kind and helpful, and the students are friendly.

With the help of his English teacher, Indra was recently accepted into the prestigious Summer Search program, which helps students build the academic and social skills needed to succeed in college.

About our students:

- We serve 190 students who speak 29 languages.
- They come from 25 countries: Bhutan, Burma, China, Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen
- We serve 52 refugee students who escaped from ethnic conflicts in Liberia, Russia, Nepal, Bhutan, Uzbekistan, Tibet, and Burma.
- We offer our students after-school programming in Capoeira, Bicycling, Gardening, and Soccer. In addition, tutoring with UC Berkeley students is available for all students daily in the library.

Oakland International Grows Into Its Future

As we wrap up our second year, we have already nearly doubled the number of students since we opened. To continue offering our 200 students the resources they deserve, we recently were awarded a California State Partnership Academy Grant, establishing major, multi-year funding for a Multimedia Communications Academy on our campus.

Starting next fall, the academy will provide students with amazing opportunities, and prepare them for college coursework and jobs in Communications through classes such as Introduction to Computers, Animation, Web Design, Documentary Filmmaking, and more. To give school-site work a real-world context, students will also take part in multimedia-related internships. We are thrilled about this program and invite you to come visit the school to learn more or contact us to find out how you can support OIHS students!

Help us
reach our goal
of \$20,000

What's happening at OIHS

OIHS Seniors are College-Bound!

Congratulations to the first graduating class of Oakland International High School! We are so proud of these three students, our first graduates, who are blazing the trail for OIHS. These seniors have only been in the country for two years and are all going to college in the fall.

Masha Vdovychenko, from Ukraine, has been accepted to California State University Monterey Bay; Kay Kamaluddin, from Uzbekistan, will attend CSU Eastbay; and Hamza Hachim, from Morocco, will attend Laney College.



OIHS on Film!

The Katahdin Foundation, a Berkeley-based production company, has begun shooting "Immigration High," a feature-length documentary chronicling Oakland International students' experiences as newly-arrived immigrants acclimating to American high school: "the journey after the journey." The filmmakers are working with several OIHS students to bring their amazing stories to light, and to film. The filmmakers will be on campus covering daily life for the next couple of years... Stay tuned for more!

Support OIHS!

More than 90 percent of our families are low-income, which makes just getting to school a challenge for many OIHS students, given that our public school budget does not cover transportation of any kind. With 84 percent of our kids living outside the immediate area, the average one-way commute is an hour long. In a survey of OIHS families, we discovered that the majority of students would commit to taking part in our after-

school program if we offered them bus passes as an incentive.

Thanks to donations from generous supporters, we purchased 30-day bus passes for all students attending after-school tutoring. As a result, tutoring grew into a thriving program this year, with attendance jumping from eight students a week to more than 60! Outcomes like this show what is possible when our students' ambition is backed by needed resources.

To capitalize on the growing success of our after-school program and give our students the new experiences they deserve, we are determined to raise \$20,000 before next school year to continue to fund bus passes, expand our after-school activities, fund field trips and college trips, and more – all opportunities that fall far outside our ever-tightening budget. You can make a one-time or recurring tax-deductible donation online at www.smallschoolsfoundation.org (designating "Oakland International"), or by sending a check to "OSSF/OIHS," P.O. Box 20238, Oakland, CA 94620. Thank you for your support!

OIHS College Corner

- Our 11th-graders are well into their College Readiness Project, which includes resume and personal statement workshops, college-prep web resources, and a panel discussion with immigrant college students.
- OIHS juniors recently attended the Laney College Open House and toured San Francisco State University in preparation for their college application process.

Internationals Network Honored

The Internationals Network for Public Schools recently won a Migration Policy Institute E Pluribus Unum award for exceptional immigrant integration initiatives. OIHS is one of 11 schools in the Internationals Network.

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Support Our Students

Donations may be made online or by mail:

OSSF/ OIHS Fund, PO Box 20238 Oakland, CA 94620

For more information, please contact us by phone: (510) 534-7613
or online (please designate OIHS): <http://www.smallschoolsfoundation.org>

