Creating the Conditions for Children to Learn

Oakland's Districtwide Community Schools Initiative

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Executive Summary

Community schools partner with local organizations and family members to integrate a range of supports and opportunities for students, families, and the community in order to promote students' physical, social, emotional, and academic well-being. Community schools typically incorporate four key pillars: (1) **integrated systems of support**, such as mental and physical health care and other wraparound services; (2) **enriched and expanded learning time and opportunities**, including lengthening the school day and year as well as enriching the curriculum through student-centered learning; (3) **active family and community engagement** that includes service provision and meaningful partnerships with family members; and (4) **collaborative leadership practices** that coordinate school services and include various school actors in decision-making.

Across the United States, policymakers, educators, and community members increasingly support community schools as a method of improving whole child outcomes. Research shows that community schools generate a range of positive outcomes through a collaborative and equitable approach to education, particularly among students from marginalized groups. These include improvements in attendance, academic achievement, and graduation rates as well as reductions in racial and economic opportunity gaps. State policymakers have made significant investments in community schools, such as the grants offered through California's $4.1 billion Community Schools Partnership Program. Other states—including Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, and Vermont—have also grown their investments in community schools and whole child services. Federal policymakers have increased investments both in full-service community schools and in services they deploy, such as physical health and mental health services for children.

Support for community schools has also been propelled by a growing recognition that schools serve as central hubs of their communities. Community schools have relationships and infrastructures in place that enable them to mobilize support and meaningfully connect with their students and families. This was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted long-standing systemic inequities in schools and a need to focus on whole child educational practices. As districts look to help students recover from the pandemic and succeed in college, career, and life, a whole child approach to education will be critical.

There is a common misperception that community schools primarily or exclusively focus on the provision of external supports (e.g., site-based health care), but this is only one of many whole child educational strategies that high-quality community schools tend to provide. A whole child educational approach is grounded in the science of learning and development (SoLD). This research tells us that many factors shape students' development, well-being, and learning, including in-school conditions, such as the presence or absence of positive relationships, and out-of-school conditions, such as the socioeconomic stability of their families and neighborhoods.

Furthermore, research indicates that schools that optimize student learning, development, and well-being are those that integrate essential principles of whole child education. These include **positive developmental relationships** in which adults provide care and guidance that enable youth to grow their agency, learn skills, and take on new challenges; **environments of safety and belonging** in which young people feel physically and emotionally safe and safe in their identities, knowing that they and their cultures are a valued part of the community; **rich learning experiences** that develop students' deep understanding and center students by building on their strengths and experiences; the **development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills, habits, and mindsets**, including executive function, a growth mindset, personal and social awareness, interpersonal skills, resilience and perseverance, metacognition, and self-direction; and **integrated support systems** that enable schools to meet students' holistic needs. At their core, community schools recognize the importance of attending to students' holistic needs to further learning, growth, and well-being—a key principle of SoLD and whole child education.

With historic investments in the community schools approach at the federal and state levels, educational leaders can benefit from learning how to build, implement, and sustain high-quality community schools in policy and practice. This study builds this understanding by examining the relationship between district support, community schools, and whole child educational practices within the Oakland Unified School District (Oakland Unified). Oakland Unified is an important and relevant case for investigation because it is a long-standing, full-service community schools (FSCS) district that intentionally links whole child education to its community schools initiative. This report describes how the district supports three community schools—one elementary, one middle, and one high school—by providing a centralized infrastructure that enables them to function as community schools while also prioritizing whole child educational practices. The report suggests the following.

Oakland Unified has sustained its FSCS initiative through leadership turnover and periods of lean funding by engaging a wide range of stakeholders, braiding varied funding sources, and enacting formal policy commitments that make community schools a stable part of the district infrastructure. Despite having five different superintendents in its first decade and significant financial challenges, Oakland Unified has maintained a commitment to its FSCS initiative through an extended visioning process that has included a broad range of school and community actors; the blending and braiding of multiple state, federal, and philanthropic funding sources; the accumulation of policy documentation to ensure institutional memory; and a master agreement between the district and Alameda County.

Oakland Unified built its community schools initiative on whole child education principles that enabled schools to improve a range of conditions for student learning. Oakland Unified has embraced whole child education and equity as guiding principles of its community schools initiative and implemented practices to enact

these principles, as documented in the district's professional development priorities, family engagement efforts, and district initiatives such as restorative justice and the African American Male Achievement initiative.

Oakland Unified developed district-level infrastructure that supported schools to implement community school approaches. The district partnered with county-level agencies to bolster the provision of integrated supports in schools. It also centralized the management of many partnerships; this enabled schools to focus on delivering programs and services (e.g., academic interventions and mental health services) without the extra burden of managing partnerships.

Oakland Unified developed school-site roles and systems to support community schools. Operating as a community school requires an expansion of traditional school functions; dedicated personnel, such as community school managers and service teams, enable schools to build and embed the necessary infrastructure. Schools in Oakland Unified universally utilize Coordination of Services Teams (COSTs), which systematically connect students and families with academic interventions and mental, behavioral, and physical health supports and services.

Oakland Unified built staff capacity to implement community schools by providing professional development for community school managers and others in unique community school positions (e.g., newcomer social workers). This has led to improvements in school culture and climate and has facilitated essential supports for a growing population of newcomer students (i.e., students who have been in the United States for less than 3 years and speak a language other than English at home).

Oakland Unified developed common tools and processes to promote family engagement. District and school leaders have expressed a vision for family and community engagement and have enacted structures for local decision-making that include students and families. Staff in the study schools used multiple strategies to make families feel welcome in school communities. Although parents commonly reported deep appreciation for these efforts, some family and community members expressed dissatisfaction with their level of inclusion in school governance.

District- and school-level integration of community school supports allowed teachers to focus on improving curriculum and instruction. Teachers interviewed for this study reported that with integrated services, and with processes in place that connect students and families with resources, they were able to prioritize student-centered learning opportunities, such as project-based learning around contemporary and/or local topics; work-based opportunities that are central to Linked Learning pathways in high school; culturally affirming curriculum; and the infusion of social and emotional learning throughout the school day.

Community schools in our study received district support for promoting positive relationships throughout their school communities. Schools used various strategies—such as family conferences and advisory systems—to promote positive in-school relationships, and these efforts were supported through professional development provided by the district. Student reports of school climate at the middle and high school levels suggest that further development in this area is still needed.

Implications for Districts and Schools

Findings from this study suggest ways in which districts can support and sustain community schools over time and help schools integrate whole child education and community school approaches. The following implications can inform community school implementation in a range of settings:

- **Sustaining community school initiatives.** Districts adopting community school initiatives should consider implementing processes to enable broad-based support among school and community actors; diversifying funding sources; and formalizing plans and commitments through district policy and documentation. Such strategies have sustained Oakland Unified's initiative.
- **Developing a district-level infrastructure to facilitate partnerships.** Districts can facilitate community schools and whole child approaches by centralizing partnership processes that enable integration of school-level supports and increasing cross-sector collaboration at the county level. These district supports enabled the study schools to provide a wide range of health and educational services without placing additional administrative burdens on schools.
- **Linking whole child education and community school approaches.** Oakland Unified's vision for community schools explicitly links whole child education and community school approaches. The district provides an infrastructure that connects students with resources while enabling educators to center whole child educational approaches. Personalized approaches, positive behavioral supports for students, and professional development and capacity building for school-level staff are prioritized at the central level. Districts and schools must also invest in strategies that promote students' sense of belonging and connection, particularly at the secondary level.
- **Developing school-level roles and structures that support service delivery.** Districts can support schools by bringing coherence to staff roles in which new work streams are managed (e.g., community school managers); developing universal systems (e.g., COSTs) that allow school teams to efficiently match students and families with needed resources; and providing professional learning and networking for staff in these roles and on these teams.

- **Building the capacity of school staff to enable the school to function as a community school.** Districts can support schools by providing professional learning opportunities to help staff embrace new structures, work streams, and dispositions. Oakland Unified provides coaching and mentorship for principals and other staff, interschool learning communities, and training on various topics related to student and family well-being. These types of learning opportunities supported our study schools in functioning as community schools and in improving their school climates.
- **Engaging families in decision-making.** Deeply engaging all families and sharing aspects of school governance and decision-making with them is important and challenging and takes time and effort. Districts can support schools by introducing strategies such as family outreach, conferences with teachers or advisors, and inclusive school decision-making.

Introduction

> "We realize that teaching and creating the conditions for kids to achieve is not just about the teachers. We have to provide other supports that provide the conditions for kids to learn. … We are thinking of the family and the whole child, not just the academic needs."
>
> — Principal Anita Iverson-Comelo, Bridges Academy at Melrose

Community schools partner with local organizations and family members to integrate a range of supports and opportunities for students, families, and the community in order to promote students' physical, social, emotional, and academic well-being. While every community school differs in its response to the assets and needs of its community, each typically incorporates four key pillars: (1) **integrated systems of support**, such as mental and physical health care and other wraparound services; (2) **enriched and expanded learning time and opportunities**, including lengthening the school day and year as well as enriching the curriculum through student-centered learning opportunities; (3) **active family and community engagement** that includes service provision and meaningful partnerships with family members; and (4) **collaborative leadership practices** that facilitate the coordination of community school services and include various school stakeholders in site-based decision-making.

Across the United States, policymakers, educators, and community members increasingly support community schools as a method of supporting whole child outcomes.[1] This support has been propelled by a growing recognition that schools serve as central hubs of their communities. Community schools have relationships and infrastructures in place that enable them to mobilize support and meaningfully connect with their students and families. State policymakers have made significant investments in community schools, such as the grants offered through California's $4.1 billion Community Schools Partnership Program. Other states—including Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, and Vermont—have also grown their investments in community schools and whole child services.[2] Federal policymakers have increased investments in both full-service community schools (FSCS) and the services they deploy, such as health and mental health services for children.[3]

The need for community schools, which expand the traditional functions of schools, was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted long-standing systemic inequities in schools and a need to focus on whole child education and supports.[4] As districts look to help students recover from the pandemic and succeed in college, career, and life, a whole child approach to education will be critical. Community schools are an evidence-based strategy for implementing whole child educational approaches that have been shown to generate a range of positive outcomes through a collaborative and equitable approach to education, particularly

among students from marginalized groups. These outcomes include improvements in attendance, academic achievement, and graduation rates as well as reductions in racial and economic opportunity gaps.[5]

Community Schools and Whole Child Education

A common misperception about community schools is that their primary or exclusive focus is the provision of external supports (e.g., site-based health care). While integrated systems of support are one institutional pillar in these schools, there is a growing understanding that high-quality community school strategies integrate a range of whole child educational practices.[6] Community school implementation that is grounded in whole child educational practices enables community schools to address the full scope of children's development across multiple domains—including academic, physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and emotional learning.

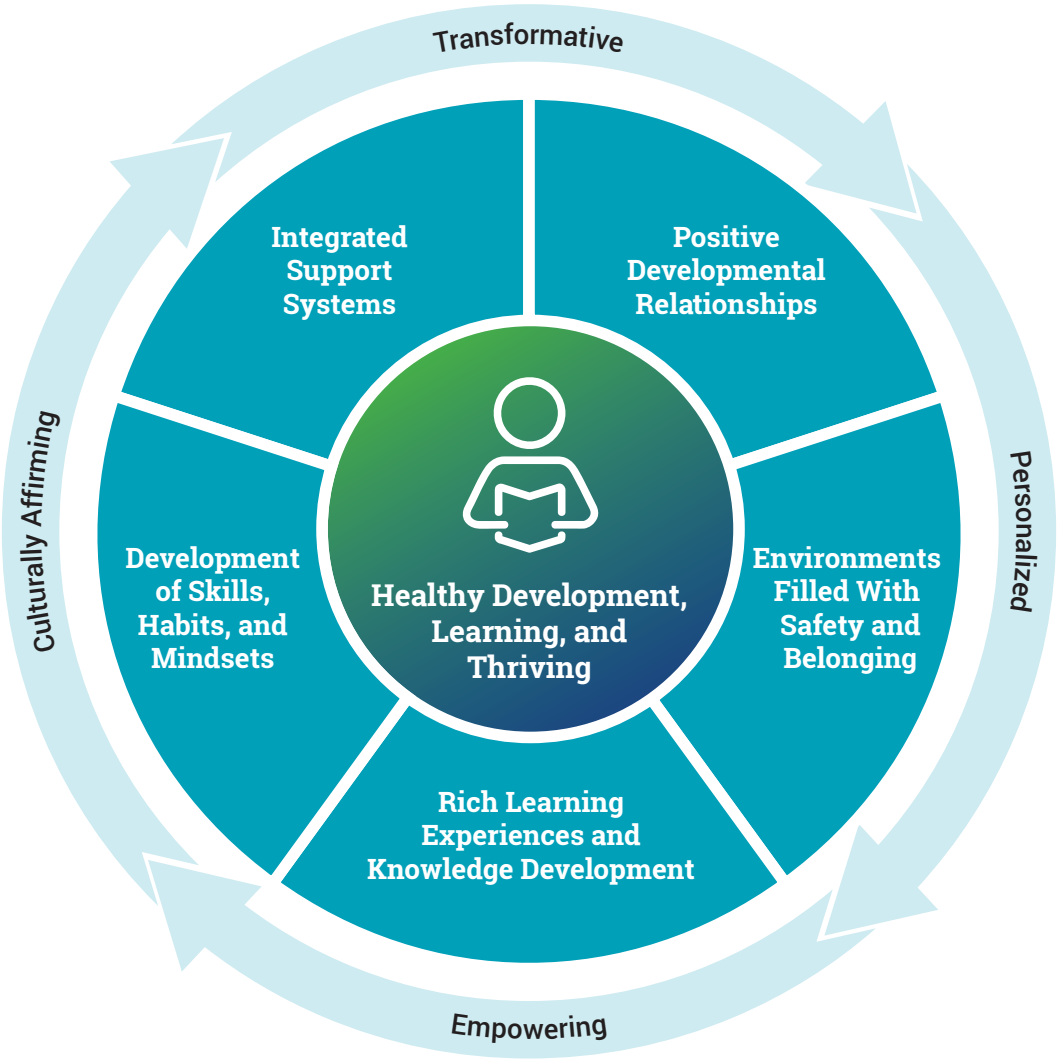
Community school implementation that is grounded in whole child educational practices enables community schools to address the full scope of children's development across multiple domains—including academic, physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and emotional learning.

A whole child educational approach builds on the science of learning and development (SoLD). New syntheses of research from neuroscience, the learning and developmental sciences, sociology, anthropology, and other fields have helped expand our understanding of how biological and environmental factors interact to affect learning.[7] The research on learning and development tells us that as young people grow, a multitude of factors shape their development, well-being, and learning. These factors include in-school conditions, such as the presence or absence of positive relationships and engaging learning opportunities, as well as out-of-school conditions, such as the socioeconomic status of a student's family and neighborhood.

In addition to underscoring the importance of context, the research on learning and development points to some fundamental principles about how individuals develop and learn. It tells us that the brain is malleable and that life experiences and brain development are interdependent—that is, the settings and conditions individuals are exposed to and immersed in affect how they grow throughout their lives. It also suggests that variability in human development is the norm, not the exception; human capacities grow across a spectrum (physical, cognitive, and affective) in interactive ways; adversity affects learning; and children actively construct knowledge based on their experiences, relationships, and contexts.

These understandings of how people learn and develop hold implications for the ways we design schools and learning experiences. Syntheses of research tell us that schools that optimize student learning, development, and well-being are those that integrate structures and practices that instantiate the Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole Child Design.[8] (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1
Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole Child School Design



Source: Learning Policy Institute & Turnaround for Children. (2021). *Design principles for schools: Putting the science of learning and development into action*. https://k12.designprinciples.org/

Positive developmental relationships are foundational for student learning and well-being. In a positive developmental relationship, adults provide care and guidance that enable youth to grow their agency and confidence and become more able to learn skills, perform tasks, and take on new challenges. Schools can be organized to foster positive developmental relationships through structures and practices that personalize

relationships with students, build relationships with families, and support relationships among staff. Some of these practices include advisory systems that provide a family unit with an adult advocate for secondary students; innovative strategies for connecting with students and families, such as home visits; and distributed leadership structures that allow teachers to participate in school decision-making.

Environments of safety and belonging are also foundational to a whole child educational approach. Young people are more able to learn and take risks when they feel not only physically safe, with routines and order, but also emotionally safe and safe in their identities, knowing that they and their cultures are a valued part of the community. Some of the practices that schools can utilize to cultivate a safe and inclusive environment include implementing positive approaches to classroom management, teaching students conflict-resolution strategies, and building upon students' assets and backgrounds through culturally affirming curriculum and activities.

Rich learning experiences and knowledge development are essential to student learning and development. Rich learning experiences develop students' deep understanding. They center students by building on their individual strengths and experiences and make content meaningful and accessible. These kinds of experiences should be integrated into classroom instruction and expanded learning opportunities. Some of the strategies that schools can use to make learning rich and meaningful include inquiry-based learning, in which students take an active role in constructing knowledge and engage in authentic tasks, and culturally responsive pedagogy that affirms students' strengths and connects students' prior knowledge and cultural experiences to the content under study.

The development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills, habits, and mindsets—including executive function, a growth mindset, personal and social awareness, interpersonal skills, resilience and perseverance, metacognition, and self-direction—is a critical part of optimizing student learning and development. Because the brain is cross-wired and interconnected, these skills are interrelated and can (and should) be taught, modeled, and practiced in a way that is integrated across subject areas and school settings. Schools can develop young people's skills, habits, and mindsets by integrating social and emotional development throughout instruction (e.g., collaboration protocols and self-assessment protocols) and school activities.

Finally, schools utilizing a whole child educational approach maintain **integrated support systems**. Schools with integrated support systems bring together community and school resources for physical and mental health, social services, and expanded learning time and infuse these practices into day-to-day schooling so that students' needs are effectively identified and holistically addressed. Integrated support systems require structures to help educators understand student wellness and external partnerships that allow schools to provide a variety of services and programs for students, such as expanded learning opportunities, social services, and academic

interventions. Many schools create integrated support systems by building multi-tiered systems of support, which include universal supports for all students (e.g., positive behavioral support strategies), supplemental supports targeted to address specific student needs (e.g., small-group tutoring), and intensive supports for individuals who are at particularly high levels of risk (e.g., high-dosage counseling sessions).

At their core, community schools hold a deep recognition of the importance of attending to students' holistic needs to further learning, growth, and well-being—a key principle of SoLD and whole child education. The four pillars of community schools can also create the conditions for SoLD principles to flourish. Community school pillars such as collaborative leadership and practices and active family and community engagement can orient these schools toward relationship building and inclusive forums that nurture a positive school climate. Dedicated community school managers and directors, who are commonly employed in these institutions, can also help establish and maintain integrated support systems, making these interventions more accessible, coordinated, and equitable. Finally, with their attention to providing enriched and expanded learning, community schools can create opportunities for young people to engage in an array of learning experiences that pique their curiosity, nurture their full range of skills and habits, and engage them in meaningful and culturally relevant learning.

The Current Study

With historic investments in the community schools approach at the federal and state levels, educational leaders must understand how to build, implement, and sustain high-quality community schools in policy and practice. Districts seeking to implement community schools can look to existing initiatives for lessons learned, site-level design strategies, and approaches to building a district-level infrastructure.

This study examines the relationship between district support, community schools, and whole child educational practices within the Oakland Unified School District (Oakland Unified). Oakland Unified is an important and relevant case for investigation because it is a long-standing, full-service community schools district that intentionally links whole child education to its community schools initiative. Additionally, the district has made impressive gains and achievements over the past decade (detailed in the following section), which suggests that district-level practices in place in Oakland Unified are worthy of examination. The study describes how the district infrastructure in Oakland Unified supports community school implementation and associated whole child practices, and it highlights practices within three schools—one elementary, one middle, and one high school—to provide examples of whole child practices at each level.

The current study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. What district-level infrastructure is in place to support community schools and whole child education?

2. How do community schools enact whole child educational practices?
3. How does district-level infrastructure support the implementation of community schools and whole child education?

While several studies have examined community school implementation,[9] they have typically described the key components of implementation (e.g., community-based organization partnerships and expanded learning time) without a specific focus on the ways in which district-level infrastructure is set up to support community school implementation. A primary focus of this study is on the district-level supports in Oakland Unified that enable schools implementation of community school approaches. Additionally, unlike other studies, this study places a particular focus on understanding *how* community schools can implement the full range of whole child educational practices with support from the four pillars of community schools.

To address the study's research questions, the research team drew on surveys of students and administrative data about school outcomes, as well as interviews with district personnel and practitioners at three Oakland community schools: Bridges Academy at Melrose, an elementary school; Urban Promise Academy, a middle school; and Oakland High School. We also conducted observations of school events and activities as well as district-led meetings and professional learning community sessions. (For a detailed description of the study's methods, see Appendix A.) Additionally, this study leveraged findings from an extensive 8-year longitudinal study of Oakland Unified's Full-Service Community Schools initiative—including district practices and policies—to provide a rich context for district community schools development over time.[10]

Findings suggest that Oakland Unified created and leveraged key personnel, services, structures, and systems at the district level that supported community schools to embody whole child educational practices. These district-level structures and practices supported schools to:

- incorporate school-based health initiatives through county-level coordination;
- manage and sustain relationships with external partners;
- incorporate supportive personnel, such as community school managers, who develop school-level systems and processes that support whole child educational practices;
- efficiently connect students and families to services and supports through Coordination of Services Teams (COSTs);
- develop the capacity of school staff so that they can more effectively implement whole child educational practices; and
- engage family members and include them in school decision-making.

The report begins with an overview of Oakland Unified's path to becoming a full-service community schools district as well as the challenges and successes faced by the district along the way. We then describe district-level supports and infrastructure. After that, examine how those supports translate into school practices—at the elementary, middle, and high school levels—that align with the five Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole Child Design (see Figure 1):

1. Centering positive, developmental relationships
2. Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment
3. Developing social and emotional skills
4. Engaging students in rich learning and knowledge development
5. Building integrated systems of support

The section after that summarizes how the district community schools infrastructure supports school-level whole child practices. The report concludes with a discussion of the study's implications for districts and schools.

Oakland Unified's Full-Service Community Schools Initiative

The Oakland Unified School District (Oakland Unified) serves the city of Oakland, the largest city in the East Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area. The city has one of the most diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic demographic profiles in the country, which is reflected in the Oakland Unified student population. The district's 80 schools serve approximately 35,000 students, of whom 21% are African American, 45% are Latinx, 13% are Asian and Pacific Islander, 11% are White, and 6% are multiethnic.[11] Half of district students speak a language other than English at home, and 8% are newcomer students who, in addition to speaking a language other than English at home, have been in the United States for less than 3 years. Approximately three quarters of district students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.[12]

As in many other large, urban areas, racial and geographic inequities are prevalent in Oakland and have a deep impact on district schools, a reality that spurred planning for the district's full-service community schools (FSCS) initiative. In *Community Schools, Thriving Students*, the 2011 strategic plan that formalized the district's commitment to becoming a FSCS district, Tony Smith, the Superintendent at the time, acknowledged:

> We have not met the needs of all children, and we do not have high-quality schools in every neighborhood. African American, Latino, and English Language Learning students, as well as our students who live in poverty, do not have access to opportunities that other children in Oakland have. Our city remains divided by predictable patterns of low performance, [a] high incidence of violence, and [a] lack of connection. … This is not acceptable and not healthy for our community as a whole. … The plan that follows … describes our efforts to create a public school system that works with citizens and institutions to coordinate, align, and leverage resources for the well-being of Oakland's children and families.[13]

The sections that follow describe Oakland's path to becoming an FSCS district as well as the challenges and successes that the district has faced along the way.

Building Blocks

Oakland Unified's FSCS initiative was built on several preceding efforts. Oakland has a long history of community organizing, activism, and civic engagement, with educational justice often at the center.[14] For example, from the late 1990s through the mid-2000s, student-led initiatives challenged the lack of funds in public education and called for expanded student supports to redress high levels of student dropout and disengagement.[15] During that same period, parent and community-based organizations, such as Oakland Community Organizations, also played a key role in addressing longtime inequities, advocating for the creation of what would become 48 new small schools over the span of a decade.[16] These new schools, designed in

partnership with students and families, resulted in a large number of more intimate school communities, with high levels of parent and community involvement and relationship-centered, community-based learning.[17]

In the mid-1990s, Healthy Start funds catalyzed Alameda County Health Care Services Agency to fund school-based health centers in Oakland Unified, resulting in the establishment of eight school-based health centers (SBHCs) over the next 20 years, an investment that would become foundational to the district's strategic plan. A subsequent investment from Kaiser Permanente in 2011 established eight additional SBHCs over the following 3 years, bringing the total to 16.

In 2002, Proposition 49 (After School Education and Safety) mandated that $550 million be made available for K–9 after-school programs, targeting students from low-income families. This led to one of the largest expansions in after-school youth programs and services in Oakland's history, facilitated by community-based organizations in Oakland that served as lead agencies that ran after-school programs across multiple sites. The After School Education and Safety program set the groundwork for strong collaboration between school sites and community partner lead agencies, many of which would go on to become foundational in FSCS planning and implementation.

Oakland's experience with the community schools approach deepened in 2008, with the Atlantic Philanthropies' "Elev8 Oakland" grant to Safe Passages, a community-based organization serving as lead agency for the grant. The Elev8 Oakland grant provided extended-day academic support and mentoring, health services, and family support through a dedicated family advocate at five school campuses. The grant of $15 million was augmented by contributions from local partners, Alameda County, the city of Oakland, and the district itself. Though the roles and structures to support community schools would change with the inception of the FSCS initiative, the Elev8 Oakland sites provided a relatable example of what community schools might look like in Oakland and established a proof of concept for what would be expanded to become the widespread district strategy.

Becoming a Full-Service Community Schools District

Oakland Unified's community schools initiative, which leveraged the resources, knowledge, and experiences described above, began in 2010. Superintendent Smith launched the initiative with a 10-month strategic planning process, which engaged cross-sections of the Oakland community, including parents, students, teachers, and administrators as well as members of the nonprofit, civic, and business communities.[18] Fourteen thematic task forces were charged with addressing the question of what an Oakland Unified FSCS district could look like, where the district was in relation to this ideal, and what a 5-year transformation process would entail. The resulting task force recommendations were synthesized into one overarching report, which directly informed the creation of a new 5-year strategic plan for the district: *Community*

Schools, Thriving Students. In June 2011, the strategic plan was unanimously adopted by the Oakland Unified Board of Education, marking the district's commitment to becoming the nation's first FSCS district.[19]

One of the most meaningful shifts made at the district level to support the FSCS approach was the reorganization of the central district offices. The establishment of a new department, Community Schools and Student Services (CSSS), helped the district to better cohere and coordinate community school–related functions.[20] Prior to the community schools initiative, administration of student services was spread across multiple departments. The new department consolidated all community school–related groups and units (e.g., health services, after school, mental health) under a single department with executive-level district leadership.

Oakland Unified community schools have sustained themselves by drawing from a variety of sources that provide, by and large, ongoing sources of funding. Most funds have come from public dollars, including federal, state, and local. From 2011 to 2018, Oakland Unified leveraged more than $450 million in public funds to support school-based health centers and mental health, nutrition, and after-school programs. The district also received upward of $65 million in private funds from 2011 to 2018. Additionally, the district's scale-up strategy included explicit gradual transfer of the financial responsibility for covering the community school manager's salary from district-controlled funding (primarily grant funded) to school-site operational budgets. As school leaders incorporated funding for community school managers (CSMs) and restorative justice staffing into their site budgets, this allowed the district to reallocate an additional $10 million to support other aspects of the FSCS initiative. Despite financial cutbacks in subsequent years, most school sites have opted to continue funding their CSMs.

Guiding Principles

From the outset, Oakland Unified has embraced educational equity and whole child education as guiding principles of its community schools initiative. *Community Schools, Thriving Students*, the 2011 strategic plan that launched the district's community schools initiative, states as its mission, "Oakland Unified School District is becoming a full-service community schools district that serves the whole child, eliminates inequity, and provides each child with excellent teachers for every day."[21] These principles became the blueprint of the community schools initiative and have steered the district's implementation of community schools for its duration. The district's current (2021–24) strategic plan states a similar mission, explicitly naming an equity and whole child focus, and further elaborates:

> For us to reach our vision, our mission must be to forcibly eliminate inequities by ensuring those who we have historically most marginalized are provided expanded and enhanced real-world learning opportunities, addressing barriers to learning by creating safe, healthy and welcoming

> schools, and partnering with families and communities to create the education our students deserve. …. Community schools are about operationalizing equity, not just talking about it.[22]

While all community schools inherently adopt communitarianism as a core value, not all community schools or community schools initiatives are explicitly driven by a focus on equity and whole child development. These orientations are an unambiguous, intentional aspect of the community schools approach in Oakland Unified. As Oakland Community School Leadership Coordinator Ali Metzler shared, "Our whole community school focus is to create equity. …. We are constantly working to support our schools—and especially our highest-need schools—to create high-quality, equitable learning environments. It's a constant part of our job."

Over the decade that the FSCS effort has been underway, the district's commitment to these guiding principles has been evident in its development of districtwide initiatives that support whole child education and center equity. These initiatives, which include Linked Learning pathways, restorative justice, and the African American Male Achievement initiative, have strengthened the district's community schools approach.

One of Oakland Unified's most ambitious efforts has been the articulation of college and career Linked Learning pathways to expand opportunities for high school students. Linked Learning is a systematic approach to preparing high school students for postsecondary life through project-based learning and career-themed pathways. Oakland Unified has plans to implement "wall-to-wall" Linked Learning with a goal of enrolling 100% of 10th-grade students in a career pathway. (As of now, just under 90% of 10th-graders are enrolled in a career pathway.) Currently, Oakland Unified offers 33 distinct career pathways, functioning across 16 high schools, including environmental sciences, engineering, hospitality, computer science and game design, digital media, health science, law and social justice, and education. More than 60 partners support these pathways, including leading corporate entities, government organizations, and major medical providers. Since 2014, the number of Oakland Unified high school students in Linked Learning pathways has increased from 49% to 87.7% (as of 2020–21).

The Restorative Justice (RJ) program is another FSCS-related initiative. Housed under the umbrella of the Behavioral Health Unit within CSSS, the RJ program has supported the use of restorative practices across the district. The early years of the FSCS initiative saw the deployment of dozens of RJ coordinators at school sites, offering staff an alternative to punitive discipline practices. RJ coordinators would lead restorative circles and train staff to incorporate restorative practices into classroom practice. RJ was one of multiple approaches to address school culture and climate issues, alongside Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and trauma-informed practices such as de-escalation techniques. With budget cuts, many of the RJ coordinator positions have lost funding, which speaks to the challenges the district has faced to consistently sustain all the initiatives that support the district's

community schools approach. However, district-level staff shared that due to extensive professional development efforts, RJ practices are in wide use despite the loss of funding for RJ coordinators. This was evident at the three school sites included in this study.

Oakland Unified's initiatives to support historically disenfranchised students have also taken hold. The African American Male Achievement (AAMA) initiative, launched in 2010, was designed to improve academic and life outcomes for African American male students in Oakland. Through professional development for school staff, district officials, and families, as well as culturally responsive opportunities to support young Black students—such as mentorship programs, leadership programs, and community events—the AAMA set a precedent for what would become a series of initiatives aimed at supporting the well-being of specific student groups. As of 2020, Oakland Unified's Office of Equity houses four targeted initiatives, including African American Female Excellence, Asian Pacific Islander Student Achievement, and Latino/a Student Achievement.

Challenges

The FSCS initiative has not been without challenges. The district has had significant leadership churn since the inception of its FSCS initiative. In 2013, just a few years into the initiative, Smith resigned as superintendent. The first 8 years of Oakland Unified's community schools initiative, from 2011 to 2019, saw five different superintendents, including two interim superintendents. While leadership churn is not unique to urban school districts, it would be difficult to overstate the difficulties and challenges that this instability caused. Though the district maintained its commitment to the FSCS strategic plan and vision, a testament to its embeddedness, each leadership change brought alterations in the ways that district resources were distributed and utilized.

In 2016, despite a balanced budget for 2013–14 prior to the arrival of Superintendent Antwan Wilson, the district faced serious financial challenges. When Wilson resigned in 2017, he left behind a $30 million deficit and a $10 million loss in expected state funds due to declining student enrollment. To redress the shortfall, district administrators cut $46.7 million from the district's 2017–18 budget (representing just under 10% of the district's general fund).[23] The shortfall resulted in administrative and program cuts across the district, reducing funding for initiatives that bolstered the goals of the district's community schools initiative and its related whole child educational initiatives, such as the removal or consolidation of RJ coordinator roles.

A 7-day teacher strike beginning in February 2019 posed an additional challenge, as district officials were less able to focus attention on community school efforts. Oakland Unified teachers, who had been working without a union contract since July 2017, proposed increased pay, reduced class sizes, and more counselors as part of the negotiations. Rising labor tensions and the eventual strike negatively impacted

the morale and the relationships of teachers and administrators across the district. As district personnel and teachers dedicated time, effort, and energy to resolving these tensions, other school and district priorities, including FSCS priorities, received less attention.

Additionally, the changing demographics of Oakland Unified—particularly the increasing numbers of newcomer students (students who have been in the United States for less than 3 years and speak a language other than English at home)—have posed a challenge for community schools in that the district has had to develop new strategies and supports to address the needs of newcomer students. These students, who now represent approximately 8% of the total student population, speak more than 50 native languages, and many come to the United States with gaps in their formal education. While these students bring tremendous assets, they also require additional support to be academically successful while navigating the challenges of a new school, language, and country. The district has responded to this challenge by creating new programs and district-level positions, but as we heard from school-based administrators and educators, the dramatic increase of newcomers to the district continues to pose challenges in family engagement, relationship building, and translation.

Last, a perennial challenge in the district has been that some district offices have historically viewed the central purpose of community schools differently than many community-based organization leaders, parent organizers, and activists. While the district approach to building and sustaining community schools has been focused primarily on streamlining the process schools use to engage external partners in increasing access to services and resources for students and their families, community members would like to see the FSCS approach facilitate a redistribution of power in which parents, families, and community members have greater influence over local decision-making and school governance.

District Progress Under the Full-Service Community Schools Initiative

Oakland Unified's community schools work has been sustained and strengthened since its inception in 2011. A significant achievement thus far has been the structural changes and policies that have reorganized district resources to facilitate a whole child approach. As a community schools district in service of local schools, Oakland Unified has developed a multitude of tools and practices to support site-level implementation, such as a process for building and evaluating

As a community schools district in service of local schools, Oakland Unified has developed a multitude of tools and practices to support site-level implementation.

relationships with partner organizations and a professional learning community for community school managers (CSMs). (See "Oakland Unified Infrastructure Supports for Whole Child Education in Community Schools" on page 16.) Of the district's 80 schools, 49 currently have CSMs, the majority of whom are funded almost entirely by their local school-site budgets.

The district has developed a set of long-term community partnerships that enable schools to increase the range of resources and opportunities available to students and families.[24] Currently, 60 Oakland schools have linkages to school-based health centers, providing medical and behavioral health, dental, and vision services to students and families. All schools have family member participation in school governance structures (though, as described in the following section, not all family members are satisfied with the nature of their engagement) and Coordination of Services Team structures in place, and nearly all schools utilize social and emotional learning training and supports and incorporate after-school programming. Most schools in the district also incorporate restorative approaches to building positive school climates, such as restorative justice practices and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. A 2018 teacher survey administered to all schools with a CSM indicated that nearly all teachers surveyed were using some form of positive discipline practices,[25] such as restorative justice circles (90%) and trauma-informed practices (68%).[26]

While high percentages of teachers report using these practices, student data from the California Healthy Kids Survey suggest that there is room for growth with respect to developing positive school climates with strong teacher–student relationships. For example, in 2018–19, 78% of elementary students (5th-graders only) reported that adults at their schools treat students with respect. However, for middle school students, this percentage dropped to 58%, and for high school students, the percentage dropped to 48%. Additionally, 67% of middle school students reported that their schools are supportive and inviting places to learn. This percentage dropped to 57% at the high school level. (This item was not included in the elementary-level survey.) These data suggest that, despite the district investing considerable resources toward this goal, supporting schools to create environments that are welcoming and inclusive for all students is a growth area for the district. These school climate challenges may be exacerbated by the fact that Oakland Unified has a high teacher turnover rate and that only 57% of teachers across the district are assigned to classes for which they are credentialed to teach.[27]

The 2018–19 California Schools Parent Survey indicated that of parents who answered the survey, 85% felt that school staff took their concerns seriously, 85% felt that school staff welcomed their suggestions, 84% felt that school staff responded to their needs in a timely manner, and 85% felt that their children's backgrounds were valued at their schools.[28] Teachers at schools with a CSM reported that they regularly communicated with families in support of student learning by calling families at home to share positive news about their children (100%), texting families (94%), holding classroom

parent meetings (82%), looking at data with families (75%), and communicating with families about their hopes and dreams for their children (73%). This suggests far-reaching norms and expectations around school–family partnerships.[29]

At the student level, graduation rates have increased substantially since the launch of the FSCS initiative, from 59% in 2011 to 73% in 2019. Black cohort graduation rates have increased from 54% to 76%, Latinx cohort rates from 53% to 61%, and English learner rates from 46% to 56%. Overall suspension rates have decreased over time, from 8% in 2011–12 to 4% in 2018–19.[30] (See Table 1.) While academic achievement measured by standardized assessment scores still lags below state standards, there has been notable improvement.[31] Since 2014–15 (the first year for which data is available), California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts scores have improved by 5 percentage points and mathematics scores have increased 4 percentage points. (See Table 1.)

Table 1
Oakland Unified Performance Over Time

Student outcomes	Oakland Unified 2011–12 [a]	Oakland Unified 2018–19
English Language Arts CAASPP – percentage of students who meet or exceed the standard	28.6%	33.5%
Mathematics CAASPP – percentage of students who meet or exceed the standard	23.2%	27.0%
Overall graduation rate (grades 9–12)	59.3%	72.5%
Graduation rate (Black students)	53.6%	76.4%
Graduation rate (Latinx students)	52.7%	61.3%
Graduation rate (English learners)	45.6%	56.0%
Suspension rate	8.0%	3.8%

[a] Data presented in this column is from 2011–12 except for California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) scores, which only date back to 2014–15.

Data sources: Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.). *OUSD public reports*. https://www.ousddata.org/public-dashboards.html (accessed 10/06/22); California Department of Education. (n.d.) DataQuest. https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (accessed 10/11/22).

In the section that follows, we present an analysis that highlights the primary ways in which the district has supported schools to embrace community school and whole child educational approaches. We then present profiles of three schools that illustrate what it looks like to integrate these approaches.

Oakland Unified Infrastructure Supports for Whole Child Education in Community Schools

As described in the previous section, the Oakland Unified Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) initiative is well established and has been underway since 2011. Additionally, the district has moved the needle on important academic, school climate, and parent engagement measures. To accomplish this, the district has reorganized itself and developed new systems and practices to support its schools. This section illustrates the central aspects of the district-level infrastructure that support whole child educational practices across the community school sites in our study. Our data analysis indicates that district-level policy infrastructure supports school sites to:

- incorporate school-based health initiatives through county-level coordination;
- manage and sustain relationships with external partners;
- incorporate supportive personnel, such as community school managers, who develop school-level systems and processes that support whole child educational practices;
- connect students and families to services and supports through Coordination of Services Teams;
- develop the capacity of school staff so that they can more effectively implement whole child educational practices; and
- engage family members as partners in student learning and involve them in school decision-making.

In the sections that follow, we provide a description of each of these aspects of the district-level infrastructure. We follow with a section that illustrates how the district infrastructure supports school-level practices, highlighting specific examples from the three school sites included in the study. Please note that, with the exception of two participants who preferred pseudonyms, descriptions include actual names for participants, with their permission.

Support for County-Level Partnerships

Oakland Unified has established formal collaboration with Alameda County agencies to enhance integrated systems of support in community schools. Collaboration between the district and the county is outlined in a **master agreement** that has been in place since 2004. The agreement is designed to support visionary thinking around how large public systems can effectively work together to support children and families; it does this by clearly outlining the obligations, roles, and responsibilities of each entity. As Curtiss Sarikey, the Oakland Unified Chief of Staff, explained, "That's

why I love our [agreement]—because it started at the top. It was a big, broad vision for how these … huge systems work together. And it got [very detailed] about what that actually looks like." District collaboration with Alameda County agencies allows each organization to leverage existing resources and funding sources more efficiently, ultimately enhancing the work of all parties.

District collaboration with Alameda County agencies allows each organization to leverage existing resources and funding sources more efficiently, ultimately enhancing the work of all parties.

Reaching beyond what is traditionally understood as the educational domain, Oakland Unified uses county-level partnerships to provide a range of integrated services and supports for students and their families.[32] For example, the district has employed a liaison who works with the Alameda County Probation Department to support a smooth transition for students who are leaving the juvenile justice system and reentering the school system. Oakland Unified also collaborates with the Alameda County Social Services Agency to ensure that all students and families in need of free or reduced-price meals are identified and enrolled in social services such as Medi-Cal, CalFresh, and Covered California.

The most developed collaboration between the district and the county is the joint work of the district and the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency (HCSA), the county's public health department. This collaboration is rooted in a shared understanding that the district and HCSA are strategically interdependent and mission aligned; HCSA can achieve improved health outcomes by serving students and families through schools, and community schools gain increased access to resources and supports needed to create optimal conditions for learning.[33] Below, Sarikey describes the alignment between the two systems:

> [Community schools are] an enterprise that is about creating a healthy city and community, and so we were totally aligned around the big picture of how … we should be moving together to address [the] root causes of inequities in Oakland. … It's like, how do we start to think about what [the] joint outcomes [are that] we're trying to get for kids both on the academic side [and] the health and well-being side? And then how do we start organizing our systems so they work more effectively together to get that done?

HCSA was an important thought partner for the district during the district's strategic planning process to develop the FSCS initiative, and the partnership ensured that the initiative centered the health and wellness of young people.[34] Since the strategic planning process, HCSA has continued to work closely with the district as it has developed the infrastructure to support its FSCS initiative. For instance, the district

and HCSA worked in partnership to develop the strategy and training for the school Coordination of Services Teams, which work to connect students with behavioral, academic, and mental health supports and resources.[35]

HCSA also provides direct support for the initiative as it oversees and manages 16 school-based health centers (SBHCs) in Oakland Unified. Though Oakland has had SBHCs for several decades, these efforts dramatically expanded in 2010 with the start of the community schools initiative and with new funding from Atlantic Philanthropies and Kaiser Permanente, which allowed the district to double the number of schools providing site-based health and wellness services. Currently, almost all Oakland Unified high schools host an SBHC. Schools without an SBHC have an affiliation with another school clinic or health center to support their students. SBHCs offer primary care services, including physical exams, immunizations, reproductive health services, and urgent care. Many school sites also provide dental services and vision and hearing assessments, either as part of their clinic services or through coordination with visiting health vans. Additionally, many clinics are involved in providing school health education, such as teaching core or elective health education classes for students or working with the district's Nutrition Services team to develop healthy eating campaigns.[36] By providing these essential services for students and families, schools are able to address student and family health issues preventively, before those issues interfere with student learning.[37] During COVID-19, clinics kept operating, even during school closures; in the first 4 months of the pandemic, SBHCs conducted more than 2,000 in-person medical and mental health visits.[38]

Federally qualified health centers, including Kaiser Permanente, University of California San Francisco Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland (Children's Hospital), La Clínica de la Raza, and Native American Health Center, provide staff for the SBHCs. Community partners operate three of the SBHCs in conjunction with a federally qualified health center. Funding for the SBHCs comes from the HCSA, as well as grants from Kaiser Permanente, Atlantic Philanthropies, and Oakland Fund for Children and Youth and public dollars from County Measure A, Tobacco Master Settlement funds, and local educational agency reinvestment dollars.[39]

In addition to what has been described above, the master agreement outlines several other areas of collaboration between HCSA and Oakland Unified. These include health insurance enrollment; health care internships; transitional supports for students who are in foster care, are refugees, are experiencing homelessness, or are unaccompanied minors; and capacity building for school and district staff to support the health and wellness of students and families. Currently, district and county officials meet on a quarterly basis to manage their joint ventures, assess program priorities, develop annual professional development and technical assistance plans, and plan for the sustainability of their programs and initiatives.

Partnership Management and Support

Partnerships are a definitional feature of community schools in Oakland Unified; without partnerships, community schools cannot achieve their foundational aim of serving the whole child. Through partnerships, community schools provide a range of programs and services, such as electives offered during the school day; academic supports, such as small-group instruction and tutoring; physical, dental, mental, vision, and reproductive health services; college readiness activities and programs; and service-learning opportunities. Partnerships also allow schools to offer enriched learning time outside of the school day. Nearly every school in the district (75 schools out of a total of 86) is partnered with a lead agency that provides after-school programming. As Andrea Bustamante, the Executive Director of Community Schools and Student Services (CSSS), explained:

> [The lead agencies] basically run another 180 days of school, during the after-school hours, between after school [and] 6:00 p.m. [The lead agency] hires all the after-school staff; they design all the programs; they pay all the staff; they fundraise separately for it. And then they partner with a principal or community school manager to ensure that what's going on after school supplements what's going on during the school day.

After-school programming comes to schools free of cost, as lead partners are paid by the district through state and federal dollars that are supplemented by matching grants provided by the lead partners.

Prior to the community schools initiative, each school created its own partnerships, which meant school partnerships were a function of school capacity and interest rather than need. This individualized approach to partnerships often advantaged schools in the hills—which tend to serve students from higher-income families—and left out the school communities in greatest need of support. Additionally, district staff had little knowledge of which organizations were serving as partners across the district or how partners and schools worked together to meet the needs of students.[40] Now, Oakland Unified provides administrative and capacity-building support for the district's many partnerships.

Centralizing the partnership process allows CSSS to better track, regulate, and support more equitable partnerships across the district. Additionally, it removes a major administrative burden from school sites, as central office staff assist with organizational tasks, such as checking for insurance coverage and ensuring memoranda of understanding completion. In 2015, the district hired a community partnerships manager, tasked with supporting the partnership process and community school managers' work with partners. The community partnerships manager developed a **partnership approval process** and provided **quarterly onboarding for new partner agencies**. Additionally, the community partnerships manager created and maintains a **database of all district partnerships**.

Early in the FSCS initiative, district staff collaborated with a cohort of community partners to establish a work group, tasked with codifying **standards of practice for meaningful school–community partnerships**. The work group created expectations that could be explicitly communicated to school sites and partner agencies through a centralized onboarding process.

These standards were first articulated in a **Partnership Assessment Rubric**, which provides language and tools to facilitate meaningful discussions at the school-site level about the role of partner organizations in supporting school endeavors. For example, recognizing that partnerships can play different roles at a school site, the rubric distinguishes between *specialized partners*, who may be engaged for a specific targeted purpose; *aligned partners*, who may be aligned to school goals but may not play an active role in their creation; and *core partners*, who will be closely aligned with the people who create school goals and priorities—and, in many cases—may serve as cocreators. Each role comes with a different set of expectations and responsibilities.

Additionally, the rubric describes standards for partnership quality. It makes explicit the expectation that school sites and partners will align around specific goals and engage in collaborative program planning. It also clarifies that core partners have a role to play in school-site decision-making and FSCS implementation (e.g., participation in coordination of services, school climate, and attendance teams) and that both parties should use data to assess their collaborative efforts.

CSSS has built on this rubric over time and has developed supplementary tools to support quality standards for school partnerships. The district developed an annual **Letter of Agreement template**, a companion document to the partnership rubric and the formal memorandum of understanding, which prompts discussion and agreement on specific aspects of the partnership on an annual basis. While the rubric provides guidelines on general standards, the Letter of Agreement prompts discussion on the nuts and bolts of partnership, ranging from the overarching (e.g., Which specific school goals was the partner expected to contribute to?) to the mundane (e.g., Who will pay for upkeep of the refrigerator in the partners' program space?).

Another resource developed by the district is a **tool to support annual evaluations of partnerships**, which is distributed to community school managers (CSMs) to implement at their schools. The form prompts reflections (with Likert scale ratings and open responses) on key areas outlined in the Letter of Agreement: outcomes and achievements, partnership meetings, collaboration on Coordination of Services Teams and other school-site teams, communication, and problem-solving. Importantly, the annual evaluation is not an assessment of a particular agency but, rather, the partnership as a whole. Both partner and school-site staff complete the annual evaluation separately and then come together to review and discuss their responses. The process is aimed at prompting reflection and data-based discussions of areas to celebrate and strengthen.[41]

Developing Effective Community School Managers

Becoming a community school requires expanding the functions within the school, which necessitates new processes, structures, and work streams. For many schools in Oakland, the CSM position is what allows schools to build and maintain the infrastructure needed to sustain these areas of work. Currently, there are CSMs on staff in 49 of Oakland Unified's 80 schools. The CSM fills a host of roles related to managing and integrating community school elements, depending on the school and community needs. Under Oakland Unified's FSCS policy, the district has brought coherence to the CSM role and has provided critical professional development support for CSMs in the district.

Ali Metzler, Oakland Community School Leadership Coordinator, is responsible for supervising and supporting all the CSMs in the district. Along with other members of the CSSS team, she has developed a **shared understanding of the CSM role** across the district by articulating five core areas of work that fall under a CSM's purview: (1) family engagement, (2) COSTs, (3) attendance, (4) health access, and (5) partnerships. Though these five areas of work are central to the CSM role in Oakland, the CSM position looks somewhat different from school to school because, as Metzler explained, CSMs must "respond and evolve toward their schools' needs." This means that a CSM may lean more heavily into certain areas of work, depending on the staffing configuration and needs of their school.

In addition to bringing districtwide coherence to the CSM role, an important school-level support that the district provides is the **hiring and "matching" of CSM candidates**. In Oakland, the CSM is intentionally a classified rather than credentialed position. This allows CSM candidates to reflect a diversity of professional experiences, skills, and community ties, each of which informs the potential strengths a candidate brings. The district screens all CSM candidates for an open position and then forwards the top three candidates to the school for interviewing. While principals and school teams ultimately make the hiring decision, CSSS does the heavy lifting of screening potential candidates, with an eye toward principal and CSM compatibility. District staff also work with principals to support integrating the work of CSMs into the school's Site Plan for Student Achievement, an annual plan created by school teams that outlines the strategies and approaches they will use to achieve their yearly goals.

Supporting Effective Coordination of Services Teams

Utilizing Coordination of Services Teams (COSTs), which systematically connect students to needed services and supports, is a flagship practice of Oakland Unified's community schools initiative. COSTs are crucial for bringing together many of the moving pieces within community schools, including community partners, school

administrators, teachers, and CSMs. These teams work to implement the community schools approach by increasing access to resources and supports. As Sarikey, Oakland Unified's Chief of Staff, explained:

> [A COST] embodies what the community schools are about, which is that interdisciplinary cross-sector way of supporting students. The fact that you can have your after-school director there, you can have a medical person, a mental health person, a youth development [person], an administrator, a teacher … it really is this idea that, hey, we are a village here, and we're all pitching in. It's a structured way of doing cross-discipline case management.

Most schools across the country today have some kind of process for identifying students in need of additional supports; however, these referral processes can be fraught with confusion and administrative burdens. The referral processes, seldom systematic, often place a heavy burden on teachers to identify, respond, and follow up on any concerns about a student.[42] In schools serving communities with high degrees of poverty, trauma, and health concerns, the percentage of students in need of additional supports can be staggering, presenting a heavy workload for school staff, as well as making consistent identification, communication, and follow-up challenging. COSTs seek to remedy these challenges, introducing a systematic process that school staff can use to address concerns about students.

In Oakland Unified community schools, teachers, administrators, partners, and even students and parents can refer students to COSTs for any manner of concerns. In a 2018 survey of Oakland Unified teachers, 72% reported that they use COSTs to refer students in need of services. Nearly all who make referrals have referred students for behavioral and mental health supports, 80% for targeted academic interventions, 78% for expanded learning programs, and 74% for attendance support.[43] When teachers have a clear channel to address student needs and access resources, it not only helps alleviate barriers to student learning but also reduces a teacher's task load. Teachers can "wear fewer hats" and are able to focus more on academic interventions and classroom instruction.[44]

While COSTs had existed in some Oakland Unified schools prior to the FSCS initiative, CSSS implemented concerted efforts to systematize and support their development at all school sites throughout the district. This included **training and support** for CSMs, who are often tasked as COST facilitators. Oakland Unified developed a "**COST toolkit**" for schools, including job descriptions for the COST coordinator, tips on sharing data and maintaining confidentiality, sample agendas, and rubrics to measure success.[45] The district also provided **ongoing coaching to partners and CSMs** and dedicated multiple professional learning community sessions (described in the following section) to building CSM capacity to effectively manage their sites' COSTs. Additionally, with input from the CSMs (via monthly professional learning communities) the district's Research, Assessment, and Data team developed template documents for tracking student referrals, follow-ups, and outcomes.

As the FSCS site-level work has matured, every school's COST is managed by a COST lead who receives **support from a behavioral health program manager** provided by the district. (CSMs also get support around COST best practices—the COST lead varies by school and sometimes is the CSM or a behavioral health partner.) Schools are increasingly using COST data to look at student-wide trends to inform partnerships and planning. Rather than simply being a channel for triaging individual referrals, COSTs look at schoolwide data to determine areas of need and consider more preventive, broad-based initiatives. These teams have become a core system for organizing student interventions within a multi-tiered system of supports.

Professional Learning and Development

Oakland Unified has created learning opportunities for school staff to deepen their capacity to address complex student needs and to support the unique dimensions of community school approaches. Coaches and mentors support CSMs, COST leads, and other school staff. Additionally, professional learning communities and opportunities for professional development assist school personnel in improving their capacity to support student learning and development.

Oakland Unified has created learning opportunities for school staff to deepen their capacity to address complex student needs and to support the unique dimensions of community school approaches.

Coaching and mentorship

The district provides **formal and informal coaching opportunities for CSMs**. Because the CSM position is unlike any other school-site position, district-level coaching is particularly valuable, as CSMs do not have peers at their school sites who have similar roles and responsibilities. At the start of the school year, the community school leadership coordinator works with each CSM to assist in the development of their annual work plan. Throughout the year, the coordinator meets monthly with each CSM. These meetings are typically held on-site and involve check-ins with the school leader as well. The specifics of district coaching vary by school and the needs of individual CSMs. For school sites that have a CSM for the first time, these meetings can be instrumental in setting expectations and defining priorities, especially if school leaders have limited experience with the community schools model. For seasoned CSMs, the meetings provide a helpful sounding board to refine plans and provide CSMs with up-to-date information about relevant district resources.

CSMs also receive informal coaching from CSSS staff and from five experienced CSMs who are paid an additional stipend to serve as peer mentors. For example, Rany Ath, the CSM at Oakland High, serves as a peer mentor for all the other CSMs at the high school level. The CSMs at Bridges Academy, Urban Promise Academy, and Oakland High expressed that their access to informal and formal coaching has been critical to their success in supporting students and families.

In addition to providing coaching support for the CSMs, the district provides **coaching for COST leads** (often, but not always, the CSM). COSTs serve as an essential structure for Oakland Unified community schools, as they are the primary mechanism that schools use to connect students with needed supports and resources. (See "Supporting Effective Coordination of Services Teams" on page 21.) Because COSTs are crucial to the community schools strategy, Oakland Unified supports school-site COSTs with coaching from district-level behavioral health program managers. These program managers oversee networks of schools and support those schools in establishing a multi-tiered system of supports,[46] help schools establish their COST, problem-solve issues as they arise, and model facilitation of COST meetings.

District-level Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) coaches and attendance liaisons are also assigned to district networks. The coaches and liaisons support school staff and principals by providing on-site coaching for school-based staff and teams. The district offers training to assist schools in developing PBIS programs that are culturally responsive and trauma informed. Additionally, nearly every school in Oakland Unified has an attendance team, which looks at attendance data and determines how to address absenteeism at the school level. Each network has an attendance liaison who coaches school-site attendance teams to interpret their school's attendance data and determine how to support students struggling with attendance.

Interschool learning communities

In addition to individual coaching, the district facilitates **professional learning communities** (PLCs) for CSMs and principals. The PLCs are another district-level support that allow schools and staff to continuously improve their community schools approach and whole child educational practices.

All CSMs participate in the PLC meetings, which are facilitated by the community school leadership coordinator in the CSSS office or by one of five CSMs who serve as peer mentors. The PLC provides a monthly opportunity for CSMs across the district to step away from the demands of their daily school lives to reflect on practice, share experiences, and engage with district personnel. Sometimes the CSMs meet as a whole group; other times they meet in thematic or school-level smaller groups, allowing participants to dive more deeply into issues, challenges, and best practices. For instance, the middle school cohort of CSMs may focus on 8th-grade transitions, whereas high school–based CSMs may focus on college and career readiness.

CSMs expressed appreciation for a community of peers who they can reach out to as they navigate the unique terrain of their role. Glendy Cordero, the CSM at Urban Promise Academy, shared how valuable this community has been for her:

> As a community school manager, I have this amazing group of people within the district. … Every time I have reached out to them, for whatever reason, they have been there. … I [also] have the entire community school managers group. … If I have a specific need, I just send out an SOS email.

The PLC also enables CSMs to stay connected to district developments and priorities related to their work. District staff from other departments or groups often attend the PLC meetings to share new developments and systems. For example, staff from the Research, Assessment, and Data team attended multiple PLCs to seek CSM input while refining a new data dashboard system to track student use of support services. As such, the PLC provides upward feedback to improve and refine district systems.

Principals also have a bimonthly PLC meeting facilitated by network superintendents. In these meetings, principals learn from PBIS coaches and attendance liaisons who are assigned to their network. Notably, some community-based organization leaders and community organizers have critiqued these PLC spaces for their lack of attention to supporting principals in effectively engaging families and including family and community members in school governance strategies. In addition to PLC spaces, staff from CSSS provide ongoing support and consultation to principals, especially those engaging in the early stages of community school implementation. CSSS is involved in the hiring of CSMs and works closely with principals to help set expectations and leverage the CSM role in developing a community school work plan.

Professional development opportunities

In addition to the PLCs and coaching opportunities, the district provides **professional development** (PD) on a range of topics related to student and family well-being. Training opportunities include topics such as culturally responsive PBIS, trauma-informed approaches, the district sex education curriculum (called Healthy Oakland Teens), restorative justice, social and emotional learning (SEL), and multi-tiered systems of support. To support these professional development opportunities, district staff have developed various tools, guides, and manuals, such as an SEL playbook and a restorative justice implementation guide.[47]

Many trainings that the district offers are designed to help adults shift from a punitive approach to discipline to an approach that focuses on restoring relationships and addressing students' underlying needs. Punitive disciplinary approaches were prevalent in the district due to California's zero-tolerance legislation, in place until state policy changes were made during Jerry Brown's governorship beginning in 2011.[48] For example, PD opportunities allow school staff and community-based organization (CBO) partners to strengthen their abilities to use restorative approaches for conflict resolution and communication in the classroom.

The district also conducts PD with community partners. For example, the after-school team within CSSS provides professional development opportunities for CBO partners on various youth development topics, including SEL, trauma-informed approaches, and restorative justice, so that partners are equipped to support student learning and development. With over 70 CBO partners, the district expends substantial resources to provide training for after-school providers.

The Office of Equity, launched in 2016 by Oakland Unified, offers an additional PD opportunity in the form of a four-part series for school staff on establishing student racial affinity groups as a means of furthering conversations about racial equity in schools. CSSS supported these trainings by offering districtwide support groups and affinity groups for staff of all levels.

Systematic Support for Family Engagement

As a result of consistent advocacy from families and community organizing groups, Oakland Unified has dedicated substantial resources to support family engagement at the school level as part of its community schools approach. As evidenced by the district's family engagement theory of action (see Appendix B), the district's understanding of family engagement encompasses multiple dimensions, including making families feel welcome and included in their students' school communities so that they can better support their students; providing services to support family members; and including family members in shared governance and decision-making.

One of the primary ways in which the district supports family engagement at the school level is through the district's development and **support of community schools managers (CSMs).** As previously discussed (see "Developing Effective Community School Managers" on page 21), family engagement is one of five core areas of work for CSMs. District support of CSMs, through coaching, training, and professional learning communities, helps CSMs to build deep relationships with students' families.

In addition to building coherence around the role of CSMs and supporting their professional development, the district has supported family engagement at the school level through the provision of tools and resources created by the **Student, Family, and Community Engagement (SFCE) Office**, an entity created in response to student- and community-led organizing. Initially, the SFCE Office was housed in CSSS; in 2017, it moved to the newly established Office of Equity, reflecting the district's prioritization of family and student engagement as a key equity strategy.

The SFCE Office is dedicated to creating conditions for meaningful participation of families who have been historically marginalized. Its family engagement model is designed to increase the capacity of teachers, principals, and partners to engage families in meaningful ways *and* to increase the capacity of family members to skillfully engage with their schools.[49] To do so, it is staffed by five **district-level family engagement professionals**, one assigned to each of the district's networks.

District-level family engagement liaisons work closely with three to five schools at any one time, though they are available to respond to requests from other schools. Family engagement liaisons support school sites in their efforts to engage families by providing coaching and resources. In addition to creating a theory of action for family engagement, the SFCE Office has worked to operationalize the district's standards for meaningful engagement (adopted by the Oakland School Board as a result of student and parent organizing prior to the community schools initiative) and has developed a rubric for evaluating school-site family engagement, all of which are intended to guide schools in their family engagement efforts. (See Appendixes B, C, and D.)

In collaboration with community groups, the SFCE Office has developed the core practice of **parent–teacher home visits** to support this goal. In 2017, the SFCE Office partnered with Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV), a national nonprofit started by teachers and community organizers in California, to implement a new family engagement program. PTHV provides training for teachers on how to conduct home visits, with the aim of improving teacher–family relationships by increasing levels of trust and accountability. Home visits are voluntary for educators and families and are arranged in advance. Additionally, all students in a class are eligible for a home visit—there is no "targeting" of specific students or families. As of 2021, nearly 40 schools are utilizing the parent–teacher home visits model.

The SFCE Office has also worked with schools to build their capacities to engage families in local "school site councils" (SSCs), the school entities responsible for determining school spending (also a legal requirement of all schools receiving federal Title I dollars). All schools in California are required to include parents in SSCs, and the SFCE Office works with school sites to **build both parent and school capacities to facilitate family participation in SSC governance**. This involves providing trainings for families on topics such as school budgeting, priority setting, and accountability mechanisms. It also involves coaching school leaders and SSC members in creating participatory and inclusive spaces. For example, focusing on school data has been a point of leverage; ensuring that SSC decision-making is grounded in data and that all SSC members are trained to understand that school data facilitates more equal footing and partnership among family and staff participants. The SFCE Office offers training for school leaders and families at five points throughout the academic year, aligned with SSC milestones. Despite the efforts and initiatives of Oakland Unified and the SFCE Office, family engagement remains a challenge, and community organizations continue to push the district to engage community and family members in authentic, meaningful ways.

Though the district has taken steps to improve family engagement—notably, widespread family engagement in the community schools visioning process and technical assistance to school sites to bolster family participation in site governance—interviews with CBO leaders and community organizers conducted for this study elevated a concern that district efforts have not gone far enough to transform long-standing power dynamics, including authentic power sharing between families,

schools, and the district. Individuals holding outside perspectives on the district initiative shared that there is a tension between the way that the district, on the one hand, and community organizers, parents, and CBO leaders, on the other hand, conceptualize community schools and the central aims of a community schools approach. Organizers and CBO leads who we spoke with explained that the district approach to building and sustaining community schools has been focused primarily on streamlining the process schools use to engage external partners in increasing access to services and resources for students and their families. District staff concur that a priority of the CSSS has been to expand equitable student and family access to resources that maximize conditions for learning. While family engagement efforts have been widespread, especially under leadership from the Office of Equity, district staff interviewed acknowledge that there is still room to expand systematic family engagement.

Organizers and CBO participants highlighted an important tension within school-based family engagement efforts. While schools may do a good job of informing, consulting, and engaging with families, family engagement is a continuum, and traditional school culture is often at odds with shared decision-making with families. What the district has not prioritized, from the perspective of organizers and CBO leadership, is sufficient investment in building the leadership capacity and decision-making power of parents. As one CBO lead explained, "I would say that building parent power has never really been a functional priority or emphasis in the community schools rollout in Oakland." This sentiment was echoed by other community organizers in the district, who expressed that while the district made impressive changes that have increased student and family access to needed services and resources, the district has not sufficiently invested in "transformational relationship building" in which there is shared decision-making power among administrators, parents, and community members.

For example, an organizer from the Oakland Education Association (OEA) who was interviewed for this study shared OEA's 2020 platform for schools, which describes eight pillars for community schools, one of which is "inclusive shared leadership." The platform describes several strategies that the district could use to build parent and family member decision-making power, such as ensuring that community advisory groups are demographically representative of Oakland Unified families, giving advisory groups "a critical role in creating policy," and ensuring that advisory group recommendations are "valued and meaningfully implemented by district staff and the OUSD [Oakland Unified School District] board."[50]

From the perspective of CBO leaders and organizers, this puts the SFCE Office in a difficult position. While the office's very existence is evidence of central leadership support for family partnership, the organizers and community leaders interviewed for this study felt that there has not been a necessary "mindset shift" on the part of district leadership and that authentic family partnerships are viewed as something "nice to have" but not a necessary feature of the community schools approach.

In interviews, district staff highlighted the tangible efforts that the district has made to engage family members. However, they also acknowledged that the first 10 years of the initiative were heavily focused on building the district- and school-level infrastructures that increased access to integrated supports (e.g., physical and mental health services) and that the coming years of the initiative would need to focus more extensively on family and community inclusion. As CSSS Executive Director Andrea Bustamante explained:

> We're in a strategic planning process right now as a district. … We're really thinking about how we can make sure our schools become places that truly reflect the community, and where everyone feels welcome. Our role, when we first started this 10 years ago, was focused on increasing access to support services for students and families so that teachers could refer students to the CSM for supports and free up time for instruction. We focused on our school families and students accessing services with the goal of increasing learning opportunities. We [were less focused] on the community aspects of a community school and more on the school aspects, all in service of improving academics.

Bustamante's comment suggests that the district perceived increasing access to services and changing school environments to be more responsive to student needs as foundational steps for the community schools initiative. The district's current strategic planning process will increasingly focus on the "community aspects" of community schools so that schools can better incorporate community perspectives and priorities.

Bringing Whole Child Education to Life in Oakland Community Schools

In the previous section, we described the key elements of the Oakland Unified infrastructure that support schools to implement community school and whole child educational practices. These include the district's centralization of the process used to collaborate with external partners; coordination with county-level agencies to expand services for students and families; incorporation of key personnel, such as community school managers, who develop school-level systems and processes to support site-level implementation; development of the Coordination of Services Team structure; provision of professional learning opportunities for school staff; and support for meaningful engagement with families.

Oakland Unified's community schools initiative has not only built and sustained community schools by providing key resources and support but has also enabled community schools to be designed with an array of whole child structures and practices. Drawing on interview and observational data at three Oakland sites—Bridges Academy at Melrose, Urban Promise Academy, and Oakland High School—this section provides insight into those educational models through profiles of schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. (See Appendix A for a detailed description of site selection criteria and site-based data collection efforts.) Each profile brings the school to life through vignettes, staff and parent voices, and descriptions of the whole child educational practices in these community schools. The profiles, which are organized around the five sections of the "Guiding Principles of Whole Child School Design" wheel (see Figure 1 on page 3), illustrate how Oakland community schools have been able to embody an array of whole child educational approaches within the district's intentional system of support.

Bridges Academy at Melrose

Located in East Oakland, Bridges Academy at Melrose (Bridges Academy) is a small school serving 435 students in kindergarten through 5th grade. Ninety-seven percent of its students are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Close to 90% of its students are Latinx, and most (over 80%) are English learners. (See Table 2.) Approximately a quarter of Bridges Academy students are newcomers—students who have been in the United States for less than 3 years and who speak a language other than English at home.

Table 2
Demographic Data for Bridges Academy at Melrose, 2018–19

Demographic group	Bridges Academy	Oakland Unified
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	97.0%	74.2%
English learners	82.9%	31.2%
Students with disabilities	8.9%	13.0%
Asian, Filipino, Pacific Islander	3.0%	14.0%
African American	3.9%	23.5%
Hispanic or Latino	88.6%	46.0%
White	1.8%	10.3%
Other	0.9%	4.2%
Not reported	1.8%	2.0%

Data source: California Department of Education. (n.d.) DataQuest. https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (accessed 10/11/22).

Fifteen percent of Bridges Academy students meet or exceed state standards for English language arts (ELA) achievement, compared with 36% of students in Oakland Unified elementary schools. Sixteen percent of students at Bridges Academy meet or exceed standards for mathematics, compared with 34% of all students in district elementary schools. Though the percentage of students at Bridges Academy who meet or exceed standards in ELA and mathematics is lower than the district overall, academic achievement outcomes at the school have steadily improved over the past several years, increasing by 8 percentage points in ELA and 9 percentage points in mathematics. (See Table 3.) The chronic absenteeism and suspension rates for Bridges Academy, at 29% and 1%, respectively, are similar to other elementary schools in the district.

Table 3
Achievement and Engagement Data for Bridges Academy at Melrose, 2018–19

Achievement and engagement measures	Bridges Academy	Oakland Unified elementary schools
Percentage of students meeting grade-level standards on the English Language Arts CAASPP	15.1%	36.2%
Percentage of students meeting grade-level standards on the Mathematics CAASPP	15.9%	33.7%
Percentage point change in students meeting grade-level standards on the English Language Arts CAASPP (2015–16 to 2018–19)	7.5%	5.3%
Percentage point change in students meeting grade-level standards on the Mathematics CAASPP (2015–16 to 2018–19)	8.6%	4.3%
Reclassified fluent English proficient	7.5%	5.3%
Chronic absenteeism (percentage of students who are absent 10% or more of the instructional days they were enrolled)	29.0%	28.2%
Suspension rate (unduplicated count of students suspended divided by cumulative enrollment at the selected entity for the selected population using the available filters)	0.8%	1.1%

Note: The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CASPP) is administered annually to students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11.

Data source: Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.). *OUSD public reports*. https://www.ousddata.org/public-dashboards.html (accessed 10/06/22).

Based on survey items from the California Healthy Kids Survey, students at Bridges Academy rate their school climate positively. For example, 93% of students at Bridges Academy report that adults in their school treat all students with respect. Additionally, high percentages of students at Bridges Academy (over 80%) report that teachers at their school work hard to help them with their schoolwork, go out of their way to help students, and treat students fairly, indicating that teacher–student relationships at the school are strong. High percentages of students at Bridges Academy (over 70%) also report that they feel close to people at their school, that they feel like they are a part of their school, and that they feel safe in school. (See Table 4.)

Table 4
School Climate Measures for Bridges Academy at Melrose, 2018–19

School climate measures	Percentage of 5th-grade students who agree or strongly agree	
	Bridges Academy	Oakland Unified elementary schools
Adults at this school treat all students with respect.	92.5%	78.4%
I feel close to people at this school.	71.7%	66.4%
I feel like I am part of this school.	88.7%	73.2%
I feel safe in my school.	75.5%	74.5%
My teachers work hard to help me with my schoolwork when I need it.	84.9%	79.3%
Teachers go out of their way to help students.	83.0%	76.3%
The teachers at this school treat students fairly.	83.0%	75.5%

Note: The response rate for Bridges Academy at Melrose (Bridges Academy) was 72.2% (*n* = 52). The response rate for Oakland Unified elementary schools was 80% (*n* = 2,633).

Data source: Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.) *California Healthy Kids Survey public data*. https://www.ousddata.org/chks-public.html (accessed 10/11/22).

Building integrated systems of support

Bridges Academy incorporates systems of support into its community school model to nurture students' academic growth and physical, mental, and behavioral health. Integrated supports, one of the four pillars of the community schools approach, is bolstered by partnership development. As discussed in the previous section, the district has centralized and streamlined the partnership process, which has facilitated schools' abilities to collaborate with external partners to offer integrated services to students and families, a core feature of community schools. Bridges Academy is able to provide a wide range of supports to students and families through a **network of over 20 partners** that it has integrated into its school operations. (See Figure 2 on page 43.) For example, Bridges Academy partners with Seneca Family of Agencies to provide a full-time, on-site therapist who works regularly with 20 students. Additionally, the school has partnered with the social work program at the University of California, Berkeley, which provides several social work interns who are able to

provide services to students. If students are unable to be served on-site, they may be referred to a local clinic. Additional partners provide services such as flu shots, on-site dental and vision care, a food pantry, and tutoring for students who are struggling academically.

Partnerships also allow Bridges Academy to offer an after-school program that serves approximately 140 students. The school's lead partner, Girls Inc., and several other partners, including Safe Passages and AmeriCorps, provide after-school programming for students. Bridges Academy has also implemented systems to align after-school programming with the learning that takes place during the traditional school day. As Jessica Jung, a 3rd-grade teacher, explained, "The Girls Inc. program director for our site has been pretty involved in our schoolwide leadership meetings. … She's been in a lot of our meetings to make sure there's kind of [a] fluidity throughout the day." Jung noted that these lines of communication with the Girls Inc. program director also help after-school staff provide students with individual supports that are consistent with what students receive during the school day.

Bridges Academy utilizes several systems to coordinate access to integrated supports for students. The first is a **Coordination of Services Team (COST)**, comprising school and partnership staff, which meets twice a month to review referrals for students who need academic, social, emotional, or behavioral support. The COST reviews student referrals and then functions like a triage team, pairing students with needed services, such as reading interventions, tutoring, evaluations for special education, behavioral supports, and mental health care. The previous section describes the district's systematic support for school-site COSTs, which have become an essential feature of the approach to community schools in Oakland Unified.

Bridges Academy also has an active **Attendance Team**, which analyzes school attendance data to identify students who need support. Members of the Attendance Team support students who are struggling with attendance through parent–teacher conferences and incentives for school attendance. The partnerships and systems of support that Bridges Academy has in place allow the school to address a range of challenges that students may be facing, inside and outside of school, before those challenges become barriers to learning.

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Centering positive, developmental relationships

Foundational to Bridges Academy's community school model is its commitment to building positive relationships between and among students, staff, and families. Its small size creates conditions that allow school staff to know each student and their family, and it has implemented additional practices and structures to personalize relationships with students and families and between staff.

During COVID-19, Bridges Academy universally adopted the practice of **morning meetings**. Teachers begin the day with a morning meeting, an informal time for teachers and students to check in with each other. Students sit in a virtual "circle" and respond to prompts from the teacher (e.g., What is something that made you happy yesterday?). Morning meetings often incorporate "appreciations and amends," in which students express things that have been going well in their classroom as well as things they would like to change. In a remote learning environment, this practice ensured that all students came together at the start of each day and that every student had an opportunity to share concerns and issues. As Principal Anita Iverson-Comelo explained, "In the morning meetings, kids … listen to each other, ask each other questions, and name their feelings. And they problem-solve if there's an issue in the classroom."

Bridges Academy also has a full-time **culture and climate teacher on special assignment** who works closely with students who are struggling behaviorally to codevelop individualized behavior plans to support them in meeting their behavioral goals. By encouraging expected, respectful behaviors, these plans are intended to help students develop positive relationships with both their peers and their teachers. The school also has a half-time teacher on special assignment who works with newcomer students to facilitate their entry into life and school in the United States. This ensures that newcomer students have a point person who they can go to for help and support.

In addition to finding ways to personalize relationships with students, teachers at Bridges Academy pointed to an array of practices that helped the school build positive relationships with families and solicit their feedback on important school issues and decisions (see "Engaging Family Members as Decision-Makers"). For example, several teachers at the school discussed the **in-person home visits** that they conducted prior to the pandemic. These visits allowed teachers to see their students in a new context and better understand their lives outside of school. As Ann Park, a 4th- and 5th-grade teacher, explained, "This one girl was so shy in class—produced great work but didn't want to participate out loud. But [when] I went to her house, she talked nonstop for 3 hours. … It was just fun to see them in a different environment and get to know the families." While home visits were a voluntary practice pre-COVID-19, all teachers were required to conduct virtual home visits with each of their students' families throughout the pandemic. This enabled teachers to do wellness checks with families, a system of assessing needs and connecting families with school and community resources.

As described in the previous section, parent–teacher home visits are one of the ways in which the district supports schools to engage family members, a pillar of the community schools approach.

In addition to home visits, Bridges Academy provides many opportunities for family members to take part in school activities. For example, the school hosts several **annual school celebrations** for students and families each year, including an autumn festival, a multicultural festival, and the May carnival. In addition to these special events, Bridges Academy invites families to several **workshops and classes** throughout the year that cover topics such as English language development, cooking, and nutrition. The school also offers an adult English as a Second Language class for students' family members. Prior to the pandemic, these workshops and classes were held in the Family Resource Center, which houses the community school manager's office and provides a place where parents can seek drop-in support. During the past year, Bridges Academy also set up a monthly virtual meeting for students and families called Pueblos Unidos (United Peoples) to discuss various school-related topics, such as resources for supporting students during remote learning and the school's plans to utilize new grant money to add green space to the school's campus.

Engaging Family Members as Decision-Makers

Bridges Academy at Melrose (Bridges Academy) prioritizes the inclusion of family voices. Family members are invited to join decision-making bodies at the school, such as the school site council (a state-mandated governing body in all California schools that makes school budgeting decisions) and discussion groups, such as Pueblos Unidos, in which family members can discuss school concerns and feedback with the principal and the community school manager. In addition, families have been partners in helping the school make important decisions.

Oakland Unified's decision to phase out early-exit bilingual programs in all district schools provides a case in point. Bridges Academy offered an early-exit bilingual program, which allowed students to attend bilingual classes through the middle of the 3rd grade before transitioning to classes taught exclusively in English. With the program's closure, the school embarked on a multiyear process to decide whether it would offer a sheltered English immersion program, in which classes would be taught in English only, or a Spanish–English dual language program, in which all classes in each grade would be taught in Spanish and English. Bridges Academy formed a School Redesign Team, which included several family members, that was charged with revising the school's mission, vision, and values and shepherding the decision-making process.

Initially, the School Redesign Team hosted several events for families at which district staff described the two programming options and what student instruction would look like under each one. Additionally, Bridges Academy staff arranged for parent leaders to visit schools to observe different types of language

programming. The next phase of the process included extensive family outreach in the form of informal interviews, focus groups, and listening panels with family members of different backgrounds. These events gave family members an opportunity to debrief the information provided by the district and to discuss the pros and cons of each programming option. They also gave school administrators the opportunity to gain a better understanding of family priorities, desires, and concerns. For parents who were unable to attend in-person events, Bridges Academy conducted a family survey to solicit their input.

These efforts culminated in an official forum, at which parents had the opportunity to vote for their preferred programming option. Families were overwhelmingly in favor of a dual immersion program. In the 2020–21 school year, Bridges Academy began its transition to a dual language program with its kindergarten classes. Each year, a subsequent grade will transition to bilingual until all the grades have dual language classes.

This vignette illustrates one way in which Bridges Academy has engaged families as key stakeholders and decision-makers, a pillar of the community schools approach.

> "Our principal makes a very concerted effort to get all voices [involved], especially when there's a big decision to be made."

In addition to strategies for building strong relationships with students and families, Bridges Academy intentionally develops collegial relationships among staff and includes teacher voices in decision-making. In interviews, teachers reported that the principal at the school is committed to distributed leadership and decision-making. As Mia Kleven, a 3rd-grade teacher, shared, "It definitely doesn't feel top down. It feels like our principal makes a very concerted effort to get all voices [involved], especially when there's a big decision to be made." This is evidenced by the **distributed leadership model** at the school, which is supported by a committee structure that allows for many teachers and staff members to participate in school decision-making. Additionally, the school regularly solicits feedback from teachers and school staff. For example, every year, the school uses a process to draft its School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA)[51] that invites every teacher to provide input and feedback on the plan to the Instructional Leadership Team. Bridges Academy also provides regular opportunities for teachers to collaborate, such as **grade-level professional learning communities** that meet weekly and are facilitated by teaching staff. The efforts made by Bridges Academy to engage distributive leadership strategies are illustrative of one of the four pillars of community schools: collaborative leadership and practice.

Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment

Building on its foundation of relationship-building practices, Bridges Academy intentionally fosters a welcoming environment as a central feature of its whole child educational approach. One of the ways Bridges Academy creates an inclusive environment for students and their families is through frequent award ceremonies (see "A Virtual Celebration: Building Relationships and Belonging.") The virtual assembly shows how the school **incorporates students' home languages into school practice**, which seeks to make students and families who are primarily native Spanish speakers and English learners feel welcome in their school community. This practice is carried into other forums and communication channels. At family meetings and events, interpretation is available in both Spanish and Mam, an indigenous Guatemalan language. Letters sent home to families are also provided in multiple languages.

A Virtual Celebration: Building Relationships and Belonging

On a late May morning, nearly 200 students, teachers, administrators, and parents gather virtually for an awards ceremony at Bridges Academy at Melrose. Upbeat reggaeton music and a welcome slide (in Spanish and English) greet people as they enter the Zoom room. This is an awards ceremony for 3rd- through 5th-graders, and there is a concurrent awards ceremony for kindergartners through 2nd-graders.

Julia Robson (pseudonym), the school's culture and climate teacher on special assignment, kicks off the event with a virtual talent show. She plays a compilation of student-submitted videos that have been edited together by a teacher. Each video depicts a different student showing off their talents. There are videos of students dancing, playing football, and doing magic tricks. In some videos, students share artwork or books they have read. Students narrate their videos, mostly in Spanish and occasionally in English. Because everyone is attending school remotely, each video is a glimpse into students' home lives; we see siblings, family members cooking in the kitchen, and students' bedrooms.

At the conclusion of the talent show video, Robson plays a short video featuring the school's mascot, a bulldog, riding on a skateboard. She then invites a student to welcome everyone to the event and to emcee the awards portion of the assembly. Teachers from every classroom present "bodacious bulldog" awards to several of their students. For each class, Robson displays a slide of the students receiving awards while the classroom teacher explains why each student is being honored. Students are recognized for kindness, class participation, academic achievement, and attendance.

To conclude the assembly, Robson shows part two of the talent show video. Once it concludes, she sends the students off to their virtual classrooms with good wishes for the end of the year, saying, "Everyone have a great few last days of school! We love you very, very much."

Bridges Academy's culturally responsive approach is also seen in how it has **integrated students' and families' backgrounds into the school setting**. For example, the school hosts several multicultural events, including a multicultural festival where families share and celebrate their cultural backgrounds. Families and teachers are invited to set up tables to display information and artifacts about their home countries, and students receive stamps in their festival passports each time they visit a table and learn something new about a country. Local musicians and dancers from students' home countries are also invited to perform at the event. Events like these contribute to making family members feel included in the school community. As one Bridges Academy parent explained:

> There is a program where different cultures come together—Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua. … They wear the typical costumes, [and] the parents bring food from their country. That's why you feel part of the community: because we share. That's something very ingrained in what Bridges does.

Bridges Academy has also prioritized the use of trauma-informed practices, which are grounded in the recognition that students may face any number of traumatic experiences in their lives outside of school, including homelessness, family separation, systemic racism, violence, and abuse. A trauma-informed approach asks practitioners to examine "how their responses to behavior may contribute, knowingly or unknowingly, to combative interactions with traumatized youth."[52] **Trauma-informed professional development** at Bridges Academy has focused on understanding what trauma is and how trauma shows up in classrooms and interactions with students. Additionally, trainings have focused on practices teachers can utilize to ensure that their interactions with students are sensitive and understanding rather than triggering. Kleven describes one of the trauma-informed practices that she uses in her classroom because of her professional learning at Bridges Academy:

> [It's important to have] a lot of predictability in your classroom—routines for going through the day [and] reviewing the schedule at the beginning of the day so students know what to expect. [This makes] the classroom a calm, predictable place.

Developing social and emotional skills

As part of its whole child community schools approach, Bridges Academy attends to students' social and emotional development. The school has done so primarily through its implementation of **educative and restorative behavioral systems**, which create space for students' social and emotional development in both structured and unstructured ways.

The primary behavioral system in place at Bridges Academy is a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program, which was developed to replace a punitive discipline system. Before PBIS, staff described a school environment in which there were frequent student conflicts and physical altercations. Principal Anita Iverson-Comelo brought in a PBIS system as a means of getting students and teachers on board with shared expectations and creating a positive school climate that emphasized prevention over punishment.

The primary behavioral system in place at Bridges Academy is a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports program, which was developed to replace a punitive discipline system.

The PBIS system is one way that staff at Bridges Academy work with students to develop valued skills, habits, and mindsets. The school has created several matrices that clarify what it looks like to be safe, respectful, and responsible in each area of the school (playground, office, hallways, cafeteria, etc.) as well as in the remote learning settings necessitated by COVID-19 (e.g., using a chat function responsibly). At the start of the school year, educators explicitly teach these expectations to the students, and all school staff, including teachers, office staff, and custodians, model what safe, respectful, and responsible behavior looks like. Students are encouraged through incentives and prizes that they receive when they model expected behaviors.

School staff also incorporate social and emotional learning (SEL) into the school's PBIS program. As Rosana Covarrubias, the CSM at Bridges Academy, explained, "When we started PBIS, we did … SEL with it. We … purchased this program called Toolbox, where the kids learn different tools … to process some emotions that they're going through." Though the staff have decided that the Toolbox curriculum is not the right fit for their students, they are planning to implement a new SEL curriculum called Caring School Communities. This curriculum incorporates SEL into morning meetings, a practice that Bridges Academy began during remote learning and that it has kept in place now that students have returned to campus.

While the PBIS program has created an environment in which most instances of unproductive or unsafe behavior are prevented, there are occasional student conflicts at Bridges Academy, just as there are at every school. Here, the school typically relies on restorative approaches to conflict resolution, which encourage the development of several social and emotional skills, including deep listening, empathy, communication, and problem-solving.

These instances are typically handled through restorative methods facilitated by Julia Robson, the school's culture and climate teacher on special assignment. Her approaches vary, depending on the age of the students involved. For older students,

she will facilitate a restorative conference. Restorative conferences bring together those involved in a conflict—the individuals who have been harmed and those who have caused harm—for the purpose of acknowledging participants' feelings and creating a plan to repair the harm caused by the conflict. For younger students, who may not be developmentally ready for a restorative conference, Robson uses a scaffolded process to help students take responsibility for mistakes they have made. She coaches younger students to write about their feelings, the mistakes they take responsibility for, and what they need or want from other individuals involved in the conflict. Students write these reflections on cards that they decorate and then display on Robson's wall.

Another way that Bridges Academy seeks to develop students' social and emotional skills is by welcoming **student leadership and input**. At the school, 3rd-, 4th-, and 5th-graders can join the student council; as council members, the students influence school decisions, such as the planning of school events. Bridges Academy also looks for opportunities to build the leadership of students who are not on the student council, including tapping student volunteers to help plan and lead school events.

In addition to these strategies, teachers at Bridges Academy utilize **practices to develop students' metacognitive abilities**. For example, fourth- and fifth-grade teacher Ann Park described how she guides students to reflect on what it means to engage in a high-quality discussion. As she explained:

> We'll talk about what makes a high-quality discussion. The kids usually come up with a pretty good list, and then I will videotape a pair or a triad or even a whole class discussion, and then we'll watch the video together. Then, we'll rate ourselves, and it's like, "Check plus or minus: How did we do on asking each other questions?"

In guiding students through this process, Park provides students with the opportunity to build self-awareness and improve upon their own skills and learning processes.

Engaging students in rich learning and knowledge development

When we asked teachers to describe instruction at Bridges Academy, they described the school's instructional approach as rigorous, standards-based, and focused on English language development. Because of the large percentage of English learners at the school, teachers noted that **English language development** is a foundational instructional priority, which incorporates the use of scaffolds to support students on their distinct learning and language development trajectories.

All the teachers at Bridges Academy have received training in Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD), an instructional approach that supports multilingual students in learning content and acquiring new language simultaneously. GLAD instructional strategies include incorporating visual aids into instruction and ensuring

that lessons have both language and content objectives. Third-grade teacher Jessica Jung described what it looks like to incorporate content and language objectives into a mathematics lesson on fractions:

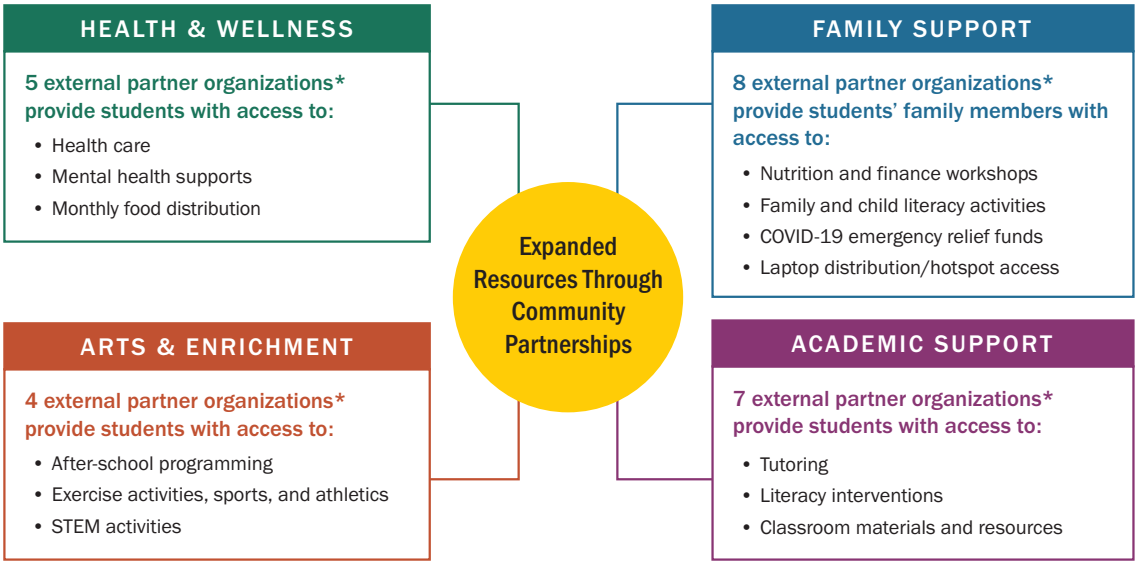
> They're comparing different kinds of unit fractions, but what is the language objective around that? Using comparative adjectives: bigger, smaller, larger, greater, or less. Having that be explicit helps. … Instructors and students know where they're trying to go.

Because students at Bridges Academy are at various levels of English proficiency, meeting their instructional needs requires skilled, differentiated instruction. The school maintained an emphasis on **differentiation and small-group instruction** throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by integrating its after-school staff into the traditional school day to do small-group literacy instruction. After-school staff worked with pull-out groups of four to six students, selected by Bridges Academy staff based on diagnostic exams, four times a week during the traditional school day.

In addition to a consistent focus on English language development and differentiation strategies, teachers at Bridges Academy utilize **curricular and pedagogical approaches that nurture critical thinking**. Among these are interdisciplinary units through which students explore real-world questions and problems to develop their content knowledge in engaging and relevant ways. For instance, Park described a unit called "The Making of a Nation: Whose America?," which allowed students to explore "who America was created for and how that has impacted America's past and present." The unit allowed students to learn about U.S. history through a critical lens by exploring topics such as colonization, Indian boarding schools, slavery and slave resistance, Japanese American internment, and the Chinese Exclusion Act. The various skills and content fostered through this project were reinforced using performance assessments wherein students were given options for presenting their learning and skills through writing poetry, creating a presentation using Google Slides, drawing a comic strip, making a video, or writing an essay.

The practices described throughout this profile illustrate what the guiding principles of whole child school design (see Figure 1 on page 3.) look like when they come together at an elementary-level community school.

Figure 2
External Partnerships at Bridges Academy at Melrose, 2020–21



Health and Wellness

1. Alameda County Food Bank
2. Alameda County Mental Health/Seneca
3. Jewish Family and Community Services East Bay
4. Oakland Public Library – Melrose Branch
5. Seneca Family of Agencies

Arts and Enrichment

1. Girls Inc.
2. Oakland Public Library – Melrose Branch
3. Playworks
4. Safe Passages

Family Engagement and Support

1. Oakland Ed Fund
2. Oakland Promise K2C
3. Oakland Public Library – Melrose Branch
4. Oakland Undivided
5. Raising a Reader
6. Stimulus Pledge
7. UC Cal Fresh Nutrition Education/UC Cooperative Extension – Alameda County
8. VIVE Church

Academic Support

1. Donors Choose
2. Girls Inc.
3. Oakland Literacy Coalition
4. Oakland Public Library – Melrose Branch
5. Reading Partners
6. Safe Passages
7. SEEDS of Learning

* Some partners provide services in multiple categories.

Source: Documentation provided by staff at Bridges Academy at Melrose. (2022).

Urban Promise Academy

Urban Promise Academy (UPA) is a middle school located in East Oakland that serves nearly 400 students in 6th through 8th grades. UPA is primarily composed of students of color, with 87% of UPA's students identifying as Latinx; 5% as Black; and 5% as Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students make up 97% of the student body, which is higher than the district average of 74%. Similarly, the percentage of students at UPA who are English learners is 46%, significantly higher than the district average of 31%. (See Table 5.)

Table 5
Demographic Data for Urban Promise Academy, 2018–19

Demographic group	Urban Promise Academy	Oakland Unified
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	97.3%	74.2%
English learners	45.7%	31.2%
Students with disabilities	14.1%	13.0%
Asian, Filipino, Pacific Islander	4.5%	14.0%
African American	5.4%	23.5%
Hispanic or Latino	86.5%	46.0%
White	1.4%	10.3%
Other	0.6%	4.2%
Not reported	1.6%	2.0%

Data source: California Department of Education. (n.d.) DataQuest. https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (accessed 10/11/22).

The percentage of UPA students who meet grade-level standards for English language arts, at 32%, is slightly higher than district middle schools overall, while the percentage of students meeting grade-level expectations for mathematics, at 21%, is just below the district average for middle schools. (See Table 6.) However, the percentage of students at UPA who meet or exceed standards for mathematics is on an upward trajectory, improving by 7 percentage points since the 2015–16 school year. Twenty-three percent of UPA's English learners were redesignated as English language proficient, compared with the 14% of English learners in other district middle schools.

Table 6
Achievement and Engagement Data for Urban Promise Academy, 2018–19

Achievement and engagement measures	Urban Promise Academy	Oakland Unified middle schools
Percentage of students meeting grade-level standards on the English Language Arts CAASPP	31.9%	30.8%
Percentage of students meeting grade-level standards on the Mathematics CAASPP	20.6%	22.0%
Percentage point change in students meeting grade-level standards on the English Language Arts CAASPP (2015–16 to 2018–19)	2.6%	1.9%
Percentage point change in students meeting grade-level standards on the Mathematics CAASPP (2015–16 to 2018–19)	6.9%	2.5%
Reclassified fluent English proficient	23.4%	14.3%
Chronic absenteeism (percentage of students who are absent 10% or more of the instructional days they were enrolled)	27.3%	28.7%
Suspension rate (unduplicated count of students suspended divided by the cumulative enrollment at the selected entity for the selected population using the available filters)	7.5%	7.6%

Note: The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) is administered annually to students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11.

Data source: Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.). *OUSD public reports*. https://www.ousddata.org/public-dashboards.html (accessed 10/06/22).

Rates of chronic absenteeism and suspension at UPA are comparable to other district middle schools. (See Table 6.) Based on survey items from the California Healthy Kids Survey, students at UPA generally rate their school climate positively. For example, 65% of UPA students reported that adults in their school treat all students with respect, compared with 58% of students in other district middle schools. Additionally, 71% of UPA students reported that their school is an inviting and supportive place for students to learn, compared with 67% of students in other district middle schools. (See Table 7.) While these measures suggest that many UPA students feel cared for by adults at their school, student responses on school climate measures are lower than those at

the elementary level. This is also true of all Oakland Unified middle schools. While this type of decline upon entry to secondary school is not unusual on climate measures, it nonetheless suggests room for growth across middle schools in the district.

Table 7
School Climate Measures for Urban Promise Academy, 2018–19

School climate measures	Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree	
	Urban Promise Academy	Oakland Unified middle schools
Adults at this school treat all students with respect.	65.1%	57.8%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who really cares about me.*	53.0%	56.9%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who tells me when I do a good job.*	64.2%	63.1%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who notices when I'm not there.*	49.0%	52.0%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who always wants me to do my best.*	57.5%	59.5%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who listens to me when I have something to say.*	50.7%	53.5%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who believes that I will be a success.*	64.5%	63.2%
My teachers work hard to help me with my schoolwork when I need it.	70.4%	66.2%
Teachers at this school have good relationships with the students.	67.1%	58.9%
Teachers go out of their way to help students.	68.2%	59.6%
This school is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn.	71.0%	66.7%

Notes: An asterisk (*) indicates students responded that the statement was "very much true" or "pretty much true." The response rate for Urban Promise Academy was 93.4% (n = 353). The response rate for Oakland Unified middle schools was 79% (n = 5,366).

Data source: Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.) *California Healthy Kids Survey public data*. https://www.ousddata.org/chks-public.html (accessed 10/11/22).

Building integrated systems of support

Urban Promise Academy staff understand that issues students experience outside of the classroom have an impact on their learning, and they have created multiple systems of support for students and their families. Approximately one third of students at UPA receive mental health supports in the form of individual or group counseling. This is made possible by the school's **partnerships** with La Clínica, Wellness Together, and the Wright Institute. (See Figure 3 on page 55.) These services continued throughout distance learning via telehealth and virtual platforms.[53] (See "Partnership Management and Support" on page 19.)

UPA also has structures to connect its families with key supports and services when needed. Specifically, the **Family Resource Center** at UPA is where families can drop in for support with navigating various social services (e.g., Electronic Benefits Transfer applications and immigration paperwork). Because the school was closed during the pandemic and parents could no longer drop in to the Family Resource Center, UPA began sending out weekly newsletters with information about community and school resources for students and families.

In addition to supports and services, UPA partners with community organizations to offer an array of **expanded and enriched learning opportunities**—a pillar of the community schools approach—that are oriented toward academics, physical health, and social change. There are multiple opportunities for students to engage in after-school clubs and sports teams to continue their learning outside of the classroom. These include the Girls Outdoor Club, the Genders and Sexualities Alliance, the Running Club, and the Anime Club, which collectively create a diversity of opportunities for student engagement and well-being. UPA also has early-morning tutoring and small-group learning times for students with special needs.

UPA's ongoing work with East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC), the school's primary partner, has also created various opportunities for child-centered learning in after-school settings. EBAYC's after-school program runs every day until 6 p.m. The after-school programming is mandatory for 6th-graders (one semester) and newcomer students. It is low cost or no cost, depending on the amount that families can pay. Full-time teaching staff at UPA serve as "quality support coaches" for the after-school staff to support the implementation of rich teaching and learning experiences, academic supports, and sports activities. UPA also offers enrichment opportunities during the summer. For example, through a partnership between the school and an organization called Aim High, UPA students and families can participate in a running program. The program helps to support healthy lifestyles and includes a training program and opportunities to join local races.

UPA uses some key structures and processes to enable access to these programs and supports. Two of the main school systems that facilitate integrated systems of support are its **Coordination of Services Team (COST) structure** and the **Student Success Team (SST)** which facilitates the process that the school uses to provide academic

support to students (see “Supporting Effective Coordination of Services Teams” on page 21). The community school manager, the restorative justice facilitator, the newcomer social worker, staff from La Clínica, and on-site therapists are members of the COST. The team meets weekly to discuss students’ mental health needs. As described by the counselor, the COST addresses the following: What needs to happen? Who needs to talk to whom? Who needs to get permission for this? Who needs to get a waiver? The counselor described the COST as a “well-oiled machine” that provides critical infrastructure for the school to support students.

The counselor described the Coordination of Services Teams as a “well-oiled machine” that provides critical infrastructure for the school to support students.

The (SST) is another key structure that connects students to needed support. The SST includes family members, teachers, and the school counselor, and the team engages in an intentional process to support students’ holistic needs. When a student has been identified as needing support, the counselor does a one-on-one interview with the student to ask questions such as the following: What have been your past experiences, and what are you excited about? Who helps you at home? Who helps you at school? What do you need? After the interview, the counselor convenes an SST meeting that includes family members and teachers to develop a plan with targeted skills and goals for the student. After the plan’s implementation, the SST reconvenes to assess whether the student needs additional interventions, such as the development of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or support from a Student Attendance Review Team, which develops an attendance contract and creates incentives for student attendance.

Students also have a say in how they are supported. At UPA, teachers and administrators work to build student capacity around advocacy and accountability, particularly through the IEP process. The UPA principal explained that she wants students to develop self-awareness through the IEP process so they know what accommodations work well for them and can make sure they have access to those accommodations in whatever learning environment they find themselves in.

Centering positive, developmental relationships

Central to UPA’s community schools approach is the development of strong relationships between and among students, school staff, and families. The school’s primary vehicle for personalizing relationships is Crew, the **advisory program**. Advisories (or Crews, as they are called at UPA) are small (approximately 20 students) and meet every morning for about 20 minutes. During this first block of the day, students eat breakfast together, informally check in with their Crew leader (a UPA staff

person), ask questions about school happenings, and listen to school announcements. Once a week, Crews meet for an extended 60-minute block, which provides additional time for relationship-building activities.

In addition to providing the opportunity for students to build connections with an adult and a group of peers, Crew supports family engagement. Teachers and school staff who serve as Crew leaders are the primary contact for students' families. Crew leaders hold three **family conferences** (45–60 minutes) per year with each of their students' families. Interviewees shared that these meetings can surface family issues, such as a loss of employment or a death in the family, which Crew leaders can communicate to the community school manager (CSM) or school counselor so that families can be connected with resources as needed.

UPA also has structures and practices in place to facilitate relationship building with families. For example, UPA has created numerous **opportunities for parents to visit the school**, including special events (e.g., a Cinco de Mayo celebration and an end-of-year student expo) and school tours. The school also offers a wide range of **services and supports for families**, including workshops on topics such as positive family relationships, domestic violence, and healthy home cooking; referrals for employment and immigration services; English as a Second Language classes; and family counseling. UPA has hosted mental health nights on topics such as cyber bullying and how to talk to children about sexual health and has a weekly family support group cofacilitated by the school counselor and the CSM. The events at UPA are bilingual (Spanish/English), as is the school's weekly newsletter, which is circulated to share school information and community resources with students and families.

Glendy Cordero, UPA's CSM, is at the center of the school's efforts to build relationships with families. Cordero, who has been a member of the school community for 15 years, served as the school's family liaison prior to taking on the role of CSM and has long-standing relationships with UPA families. Principal Tierre Mesa articulated why Cordero must dedicate so much time to family engagement. As she shared:

> Glendy is on the phone all the time, and I think from a systems stance, sometimes it feels like, is that really the best use of her time? But the reality is yes, it is, and that's because of the relationships that she has with families. It definitely has built this feeling of family at the school, and all of our families know who they can call to get connected.

UPA staff explained that this commitment to **regular communication with families** is one of the primary ways that their school creates a welcoming environment for family members. As the counselor explained, the school has a "culture of not only embracing the children but embracing their families. Really, it has to be a partnership. … You've got to bring everyone to the table." Regular, frequent communication with families is possible because of the CSM role (see "Developing Effective Community School Managers" on page 21).

In addition to these practices, UPA has worked with EBAYC, its lead partner, to develop an initiative to hire UPA student alumni as school staff. There are currently 15 alumni working on staff, including several academic mentors, a para-educator who supports students with IEPs, UPA's restorative justice coordinator, an 8th-grade mathematics teacher, and an attendance case manager. Several alumni also support UPA's after-school program. As Mesa shared, "This alumni pipeline is transformative in the type of relationships and connections we are able to build with students, as they see themselves in the staff at our school."

Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment

One of the primary ways that UPA has created a welcoming and inclusive school environment is through its commitment to **distributed leadership**. UPA leadership encourages stakeholders to bring knowledge and insights that come from their particular vantage points in the school and community to help inform the school's approach to supporting student well-being, learning, and growth. To this end, UPA has developed structures in which families, teachers, and youth can actively participate in school functioning. These opportunities for distributed leadership are seen in UPA's committee structure, which includes several opportunities for parent, teacher, and student membership. For example, the school's School Leadership Team (SLT) is made up of department chairs, administrators, instructional coaches, and two elected staff members; the SLT gathers input from students and families to inform major decisions about the school and meets weekly to analyze school data.

UPA also has a Culture Team, made up of teachers and staff members, which facilitates restorative justice circles and conferences and hosts affinity groups for students. The **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Council** is a school committee made up of family and student leaders who are charged with making recommendations to improve school equity and with making decisions to improve school functioning (e.g., uniform policy and bathroom procedures). Family members can also join the School Site Council, a school committee that makes decisions about school budget and spending priorities. These practices illustrate collaborative leadership practices, a pillar of the community schools approach.

UPA also creates **leadership opportunities for students and their family members**. For example, UPA encourages families, staff, and students to join hiring committees when school positions need to be filled. As the principal explained:

> We hold a community school model, right? So we have parents on our hiring committee; we have students on our hiring committee; we have staff on our hiring committee. [It is] critical that all voices are at the table when we're making staffing decisions.

Students have also been empowered to lead and participate in staff professional development to encourage the idea of shared expertise and accountability. Last year, students in the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) hosted a professional development

session for staff in which they discussed why the GSA is needed, what the needs of LGBTQIA students are, and how they want teachers to support all students by creating an inclusive environment. Through distributed leadership opportunities like these, students, teachers, and families participate in meaningful ways to help shape decisions at the school.

UPA also seeks to foster a culturally responsive environment that builds a sense of identity safety and a commitment to social justice. For instance, UPA maintains a range of **student affinity groups**, including an Asian Pacific Islander group, a Mam-speaking group, an African American group, an Afro-Latinx group, two Arab American groups (female and male, as requested by students), and the GSA. These groups are focused on building community, and they give students a voice in making changes at the school. Affinity groups collaboratively planned a virtual end-of-year multicultural celebration. Additionally, the African American group planned events for Black History Month, and one of the Arab American groups hosted a Hijab Day.

Perhaps most demonstrative of UPA's commitment to creating an inclusive environment for students and families is the JEDI Council. In its second year of operation, it includes students, family and community members, and school staff (the CSM, restorative justice coordinator, and assistant principal). The JEDI Council recruited student representatives from various affinity groups so that multiple perspectives were included.

Part of the stated mission of the JEDI Council is "to make sure that all student and family voices are present when making decisions that impact the whole school community. We want all students and families to feel respected and feel like leaders at UPA." To date, JEDI students have conducted an open-ended student survey, soliciting ideas on what students would like to see changed or improved. With this information, the JEDI Council has selected four areas of immediate focus: (1) soliciting input from students and families in meaningful ways, (2) changing the bathroom policy to be more equitable, (3) adjusting the school uniform policy and dress code so that it is welcoming to all students and families, and (4) investigating what changes can be made to improve the quality of school lunches.

Part of the stated mission of the JEDI Council is "to make sure that all student and family voices are present when making decisions that impact the whole school community. We want all students and families to feel respected and feel like leaders at UPA."

Over time, school staff hope to have smaller roles on the JEDI Council so student and community member voices are the drivers of school transformation. The hope is that in the future, the JEDI Council will function independently from the school staff in making recommendations. As the assistant principal explained, "The idea is we're going to help them get running, and then they will be the leaders of this

space … because we need it to be family and student run and led." UPA's commitment to building structures for youth, families, and staff members to take on leadership roles helps the school address equity in ways that make the school more welcoming and supportive. The JEDI Council illustrates what active family engagement, a pillar of the community schools approach, looks like in action.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

On an afternoon in May, a newly formed Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Council convenes over Zoom. The group includes five students, the community school manager (CSM), the assistant principal, the restorative justice coordinator, the "culture keeper," a parent, and a Spanish–English interpreter. This group is intended to provide a space in which students and families develop their leadership skills and make important school decisions. The assistant principal facilitates the meeting with support from the CSM.

The atmosphere is friendly and intimate, and the students and adults make jokes and encourage each other to participate by asking questions and soliciting input. They begin with an icebreaker in which everyone says something they want to be or do in the future. They then review the agenda and begin discussing their existing purpose statement:

> The Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Council works to make all students and family members of the UPA community feel seen and heard. We want to make sure that all student and family voices are present when making decisions that impact the whole school community. We want all students and families to feel respected and feel like leaders at UPA.

The statement is shared as a series of slides that explain why the JEDI Council exists and what it hopes to accomplish during the next school year. As everyone reviews each slide, the assistant principal calls on participants for input and ideas. Then they discuss ways that they can solicit additional input from a greater number of parents and students, such as through focus groups with parents. Then the group discusses various ways that parents and students can inform school decision-making through the JEDI Council.

One way that JEDI Council members can participate in school decisions is by joining a hiring committee for new school positions. The assistant principal explains what the hiring committee does—it decides who will teach at UPA by asking questions during the interviews, observing applicants' practice lessons, and then deciding who will receive a job offer. He shares that it is important for students to be a part of this process, and a few students volunteer to join the hiring committee. He then announces additional opportunities for student and family leadership, including paid positions in Oakland Unified's Rethinking Schools group, an interschool group that discusses school-level problems and brainstorms solutions.

They then close the meeting with a process check, during which all participants share their feelings about the meeting. Attendees share appreciation for everyone's active participation in the meeting. The parent participant offers, "I want to thank all the students who are in this group. They are brave, and if we don't have students who say what they know and need and want, we parents aren't going to know." The restorative justice coordinator shares excitement for what this group will create next year when it meets again.

Developing social and emotional skills

Crew, the advisory program described above, provides frequent opportunities for developing students' social and emotional skills. In addition to daily morning meetings, Crews meet for an extended 60-minute block once per week. This extended period is often used to incorporate social and emotional learning instruction on topics such as habits of success, anti-bullying, and conflict resolution.

Additionally, UPA staff have incorporated **restorative practices** to address discipline and behavior management. To that end, UPA employs a restorative justice facilitator as well as a culture keeper, both of whom work with students to resolve conflicts using restorative conferences and circles. UPA also maintains a Culture Team that focuses on developing students' problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. UPA's restorative approach works in concert with other strategies to support students' well-being, such as yoga and mindfulness techniques.

In addition to these practices, UPA facilitates **opportunities for student voice and leadership** by including students in hiring committees, providing students the opportunity to lead professional development for teachers, and including students on the JEDI Council (described above).

Engaging students in rich learning and knowledge development

UPA implements a rigorous and standards-aligned academic program that is supported by a range of student-centered instructional strategies. Mesa explained the school's recent academic programming evolution:

> Five years ago, we were super focused on our supports for our English language learners … and you could go to every classroom and see evidence of EL [English learner] supports in every class. But what we were lacking was rigor. Things were overly scaffolded. Students weren't being asked to critically think or do grade-level work. For the last 5 years, our focus has really been, how do we make sure that what we're asking students to do is challenging, that students struggle productively, and that we're asking them to take risks? We're asking them to critically think and explain and justify with questions that are meaningful and important to them.

Mesa shared that educators at UPA are focused on challenging students to think critically while also supporting language acquisition. For example, in an English language arts classroom at UPA, teachers utilize critical thinking questions that require students to look for evidence in the text and to explain and justify their thinking. In a mathematics classroom, a teacher asks multiple students to explain their approach to a problem to demonstrate that problems can be solved in multiple ways.

UPA has also offered **enrichment opportunities** to engage young people in student-centered learning focused on their unique areas of interest. For example, the school offers several electives for students, including computer science, music, and visual arts. All of the educators teaching electives have participated in a fellowship called Agency by Design Oakland—a fellowship focused on maker pedagogy[54] and on making learning joyful. This fellowship helps teachers teach metacognitive skills, such as reflecting on the learning process, which helps students engage in critical thinking tasks.

In classrooms, teachers seek to incorporate **culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice topics and causes**, as well as student backgrounds and identities, into the classroom. The music class at UPA offers a window into the types of learning opportunities that the school provides to help students think critically about social justice. In one class, the music teacher invited Betsy, a 15-year-old from a youth-led environmental justice organization called Youth Vs. Apocalypse (YVA), to join the class to talk about the organizing that YVA does and how the organization uses hip-hop to get the message out. Betsy shared a few music videos that students created—videos titled "No One Is Disposable" and "This Is the Time"—that were designed to spur thinking about the importance of acting to fight climate change. Betsy spoke about the importance of speaking up for what one believes in and creating media to counter the dominant narrative. The music teacher explained that YVA was collaborating with the class to produce its own music video. Betsy then facilitated a discussion with students about what they wanted to write about, and students spent time writing about climate change and other issues facing their communities.

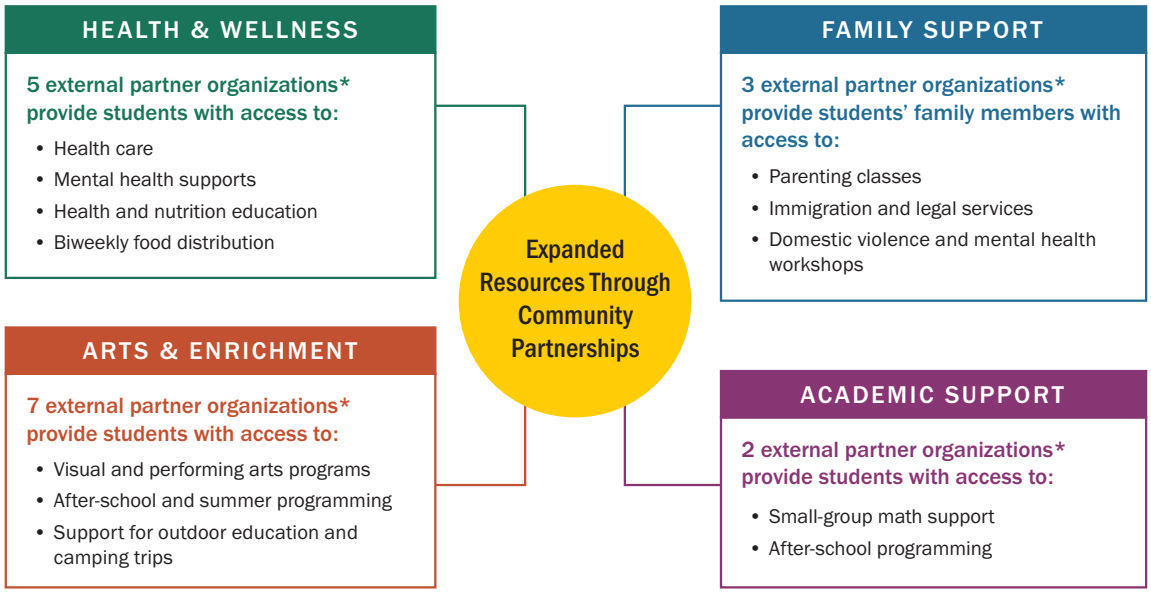
This lesson is just one illustration of UPA's commitment to engaging young people with the issues they are learning about in critical and active ways. Other examples include the school's decision to collectively engage with the book *This Book Is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell, written for middle school–age youth. UPA purchased a copy of the book for every student, and students read and discussed the book in advisories, focusing on topics of race and identity. To prepare for these conversations, the school led a series of professional development sessions with staff in which they read and discussed the book together.

To support culturally relevant instruction and pedagogy, the school has also engaged staff in a training that explored the work of Zaretta Hammond and the Ready for Rigor Framework, an approach to implementing culturally responsive teaching based on four practices: (1) awareness, (2) learning partnerships, (3) information processing,

and (4) community building.[55] Together, these practices create the social, emotional, and cognitive conditions for students and teachers to engage in rigorous, culturally relevant pedagogy.[56] As Mesa explained, "Teaching is like building our own cultural competencies and abilities to have conversations about race and identity with each other—and our students."

The practices described at UPA illustrate what the instantiation of whole child education principles (see Figure 1 on page 3.) look like when they are integrated within a community school serving middle school students.

Figure 3
External Partnerships at Urban Promise Academy, 2020–21



Health and Wellness

1. Alameda County Food Bank
2. Homies Empowerment
3. La Clínica de la Raza
4. The Wright Institute
5. Wellness Together

Arts and Enrichment

1. Aim High
2. Bay Area Wilderness Training (BAWT)
3. Boom Shake
4. East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC)
5. Harmony Project
6. SFJAZZ
7. Youth Vs. Apocalypse

Family Support

1. Cultura y Bienestar
2. La Clínica de la Raza
3. Mujeres Unidas y Activas

Academic Support

1. Blueprint Math
2. East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC)

* Some partners provide services in multiple categories.

Source: Documentation provided by staff at Urban Promise Academy. (2022).

Oakland High School

Oakland High School (Oakland High) is a comprehensive high school that serves over 1,500 students in 9th through 12th grade. Oakland High has a diverse student body. Thirty-six percent of its students are Latinx; 24% are Black; and 35% are Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander. Just over a quarter of Oakland High's student body are English learners, and 88% qualify for free or reduced-price meals. (See Table 8.)

Table 8
Demographic Data for Oakland High School, 2018–19

Demographic group	Oakland High School	Oakland Unified
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	87.5%	74.2%
English learners	27.0%	31.2%
Students with disabilities	13.1%	13.0%
Asian, Filipino, Pacific Islander	34.5%	14.0%
African American	24.4%	23.5%
Hispanic or Latino	35.7%	46.0%
White	1.7%	10.3%
Other	1.9%	4.2%
Not reported	1.8%	2.0%

Data source: California Department of Education. (n.d.) DataQuest. https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (accessed 10/11/22).

With respect to academic achievement, 37% of students score proficient or above in English language arts, approximately 7 percentage points higher than the district average for high schools. The percentage of students scoring proficient or above in mathematics, at 13%, is the same as other district high schools. As in other district high schools, academic achievement at Oakland High has decreased somewhat since 2015–16. (See Table 9.) Graduation rates at Oakland High were 82% in 2019, substantially higher than the districtwide average of 73%. Oakland High's chronic absenteeism rate, at 33%, is lower than the district average for high schools, which is 42%, and Oakland High's suspension rate, at 4%, is slightly lower than the district average for high schools, which is 5%.

Table 9
Achievement and Engagement Data for Oakland High School, 2018–19

Achievement and engagement measures	Oakland High School	Oakland Unified high schools
Percentage of students meeting grade-level standards on the English Language Arts CAASPP	37.1%*	30.5%*
Percentage of students meeting grade-level standards on the Mathematics CAASPP	12.5%*	13.1%*
Percentage point change in students meeting grade-level standards on the English Language Arts CAASPP (2015–16 to 2018–19)	-1.1%*	-4.8%*
Percentage point change in students meeting grade-level standards on the Mathematics CAASPP (2015–16 to 2018–19)	-4.2%*	-2.8%*
Reclassified fluent English proficient	5.9%	4.9%
Graduation rate	82.3%	72.5%
Percentage point change in graduation rate (2015–16 to 2018–19)	10.0%	6.8%
Chronic absenteeism (percentage of students who are absent 10% or more of the instructional days they were enrolled)	33.3%	42.1%
Suspension rate (unduplicated count of students suspended divided by the cumulative enrollment at the selected entity for the selected population using the available filters)	4.1%	4.8%

Notes: The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) is administered annually to students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11. An asterisk (*) indicates the data is for 11th-graders only.

Data source: Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.). *OUSD public reports*. https://www.ousddata.org/public-dashboards.html (accessed 10/06/22).

Based on survey items from the California Healthy Kids Survey, over half of the students at Oakland High rate their school climate positively. (See Table 10.) For example, 61% of Oakland High students reported that teachers have good relationships with students, and 63% of students reported that their school is a supportive and inviting place to learn.

However, the percentages of students at Oakland High and other district high schools who report feeling positive about their relationships with adults generally hover between 50% and 60%, suggesting that large numbers of students do not feel strong connections with

their teachers and other school staff. This suggests room for growth at the school and district levels. The school climate measures (see Table 10) suggest that the school may need to invest in additional strategies to strengthen student–adult relationships.

Table 10
School Climate Measures for Oakland High School, 2018–19

School climate measures	Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree	
	Oakland High School	Oakland Unified high schools
Adults at this school treat all students with respect.	50.0%	48.3%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who really cares about me.*	54.1%	51.7%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who tells me when I do a good job.*	58.3%	57.7%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who notices when I'm not there.*	52.0%	51.4%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who always wants me to do my best.*	56.1%	52.9%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who listens to me when I have something to say.*	54.1%	49.6%
At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who believes that I will be a success.*	59.2%	58.0%
My teachers work hard to help me with my schoolwork when I need it.	61.4%	58.7%
Teachers at this school have good relationships with the students.	60.7%	56.1%
Teachers go out of their way to help students.	59.1%	53.7%
This school is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn.	63.3%	57.3%

Notes: An asterisk (*) indicates students responded that the statement was "very much true" or "pretty much true." The response rate for Oakland High was 55.8% (n = 732). The response rate for Oakland Unified high schools was 58% (n = 4,066).

Data source: Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.) *California Healthy Kids Survey public data*. https://www.ousddata.org/chks-public.html (accessed 10/11/22).

Although Oakland High is a large, comprehensive high school, it utilizes Linked Learning pathways, designed to "prepare students for success in college, career, and community,"[57] to create small learning communities within a large school. There are six pathways at the school:

1. Environmental Science Academy
2. Visual Arts Academy
3. Public Health Academy
4. Innovative Design and Engineering Academy
5. Law and Social Justice Academy
6. RISE (Recent Immigrant Support and Engagement) Academy

Students opt in to pathways by submitting ranked choices based on their interests, and the administration systematically ensures that the pathways are representative of the school's demographics and academic performance. Each pathway includes its own administrator, case manager, counselor, and teachers. The pathways are led by two or three teachers who serve as rotating pathway directors. To provide a window into Oakland High's pedagogical approach, we highlight the practices of the Environmental Science Academy and its associated 9th-grade family, the Jaguars, when possible.

Building integrated systems of support

Oakland High has an infrastructure of student supports in place that allows the school to attend to issues that could otherwise inhibit student learning or well-being. Like other Oakland community schools, Oakland High has a **Coordination of Services Team (COST)** structure, which allows the school to efficiently identify student needs and connect students with resources; an extensive set of partnerships, managed by the community school manager (CSM); and several opportunities for enriched and expanded learning time. Oakland High also has a school-based health clinic, which provides on-site physical and mental health services.

The COST has played an important role in ensuring that Oakland High can efficiently address student needs. (See "Supporting Effective Coordination of Services Teams" on page 21.) The COST has weekly meetings that are attended by school and partner staff that do case management and counseling at the school. Teachers and other adults can refer students to the COST, and then the COST will interview the students and set up a long-term plan for care. The COST manager can refer students to various counseling programs, including group counseling, individual counseling, and gender-specific counseling.

In addition to the COST structure, Oakland High works with an extensive set of **external and in-district partners** that provide essential services for the school and its students. This is supported by the infrastructure developed at the district level, which has centralized the partnership process. Oakland High has a long-standing relationship with its lead partner, the East Bay Asian Youth Center, which employs Oakland High's CSM, Rany Ath. Ath manages school partnerships through a variety of strategies, including a monthly meeting that brings together representatives from each partnership. These partnerships allow Oakland High to offer additional services, such as academic support, mentorship programs, and college- and career-readiness programs. (See Figure 4 on page 70.)

> Oakland High works with an extensive set of external and in-district partners that provide essential services for the school and its students.

Shop 55, **Oakland High's school-based health center**, allows the school to provide a range of health-related services on-site, including sports physicals, dental care, reproductive health services, and mental health counseling. Ath facilitates a monthly meeting with all the school's health-related partners to maintain regular communication and to plan events, such as wellness fairs. (See "Support for County-Level Partnerships" on page 16.)

Additionally, Oakland High offers numerous opportunities for **enriched and expanded learning time**, one of the four pillars of the community schools approach, such as the outdoor learning experiences offered by the Environmental Science Academy (described in greater detail in the next section). Oakland High also offers a credit recovery program over the summer as well as opportunities for students to participate in internships and to take courses at local community colleges. Partnerships play a key role in providing these opportunities for students. For example, the Sierra Club helps fund and provide volunteers for camping trips, and local organizations provide internship opportunities for students.

Centering positive, developmental relationships

In high schools as large as Oakland High, establishing strong teacher–student relationships can be a challenge due to large class sizes and the large number of students that teachers typically work with throughout the day. To increase opportunity to develop strong teacher–student relationships and prevent students from falling through the cracks, Oakland High has utilized two school structures, **9th-grade families** and 10th- through 12th-grade **Linked Learning pathways**, which effectively create small schools inside a large school and engage students in thematic learning opportunities. Ninth-graders are placed in one of five families associated with a pathway, though they might not remain in that pathway after 9th grade.

Pathways are designed to provide teachers the opportunity to develop close relationships with students, understand what students are experiencing in and out of school, and connect students with needed resources and support. The pathway structure dedicates a team of teachers and administrators to a smaller group of students and is designed to ensure that every student has an adult they can reach out to for support. As Chris Johnston, Codirector of the Environmental Science Academy pathway, shared:

> Kids at Oakland High have at least one adult at the school that they have a connection to. … They feel seen, and they trust that person. [Even if] you don't have a huge group of friends or community at Oakland High, you have one person to call yours. … I think that's really important.

Teachers and administrators shared that the pathway structure enabled teachers and staff not only to get to know the students personally but also to ascertain which students were encountering academic, motivational, or other challenges and to work to get them support.

While the pathway structure is intended to optimize the potential for close relationships between staff and students, and teachers were enthusiastic about the potential for pathways to facilitate positive relationship development, school climate data indicate that only 54% of students at Oakland High responded "very much true" or "pretty much true" to the following statement: "At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who really cares about me." This indicates that ensuring all students have a strong connection with at least one adult in school is a work in progress for Oakland High.

Within the pathway structure, Oakland High utilizes additional opportunities for students and staff to build relationships. For example, students and staff in the Environmental Science Academy pathway participate in **group bonding opportunities**, such as camping trips, where they engage in learning and community-building activities. Students have taken camping trips to Big Sur State Park, Catalina Island, Pinnacles National Park, Yosemite National Park, and the Marin Headlands State Park. The trips also offer opportunities for students to take on leadership roles, such as mapping the route for a group hike. These activities also build students' social and emotional skills and provide opportunities for them to bond with each other. Camping trips also enable students to learn about environmental science experientially through exploring the natural world.

In addition to Oakland High's 10th- through 12th-grade pathways, the school has created smaller learning communities to support its 9th-graders, called "families." These families function as a cohort, in which a group of students all have the same four teachers for their key subjects. The teachers meet weekly to discuss student progress, collaborate on instructional planning, and build relationships among themselves. Within the 9th-grade family structure, teachers create self-directed learning opportunities and develop individualized rubrics to help students see their progress through their first year. Teachers confer with students individually to discuss their progress with the intention of promoting a growth mindset and to strengthen

teacher–student relationships. As an additional support to help students feel connected during the pandemic and remote instruction, Oakland High implemented **9th-grade advisories**, which are led by staff as well as the principal and the CSM. Principal Pamela Moy explained that the key purpose of advisories is relationship building and that advisories have included discussions on topics such as allyship and restorative justice.

In addition to promoting strong connections between students and teachers, Oakland High uses a variety of practices to build a relationship-centered environment among staff. For example, the pathway structure provides **collaboration time for teachers**. Teachers have 90 minutes of common planning time every other day, during which they can plan academic programming and extracurricular activities together. This collaborative planning time is crucial for supporting the interdisciplinary nature of learning within pathways. For example, M Fields, a science teacher, describes collaborating with an English teacher to support students in creating research presentations on water quality:

> Say my students are working on a project that involves collecting a bunch of data and coming up with some prototype to address the problem. Ms. Sullivan [pseudonym] will help me figure out how to get students to [think about the following]: How do I present this data to the public? Is this going to be presented to an academic audience? Is this being presented to the general public? Am I presenting this to parents? How do I have to change my presentation to fit the audience?

Collaborations such as these allow teachers to draw on one another's expertise to create interdisciplinary learning experiences for students.

In addition, each pathway has a director who supports pathway collaboration and culture. Led by their directors, interdisciplinary pathway teams collaborate to build supportive environments, identify appropriate resources for their students and their colleagues, engage in professional development, plan extracurricular experiences for students, and codevelop curriculum.

Another way that Oakland High promotes positive staff relationships is through a schoolwide **distributed leadership model**. There are several schoolwide committees and meetings that foster collaborative leadership, including the Teacher Instructional Leadership Team, a team of teachers that makes schoolwide instructional decisions (e.g., equity-oriented initiatives and mastery-based grading); director meetings, which bring together the directors and administrators of all the Linked Learning pathways; and the Faculty Council, which makes staff-related decisions, such as room assignments. As one teacher explained:

> We have a tradition of teachers playing a large role in every part of our school. It's a distributed leadership school, and teachers have a lot of control in shaping their curriculum and the culture, direction, and themes of the pathways.

The various structures for collaboration aim to include diverse stakeholder input on many aspects of the school and convey respect for practitioner expertise. The distributed leadership model at the school is representative of one of the four pillars of the community schools approach: collaborative leadership practices.

Relationship-centered practices at Oakland High also extend to families. To engage and collaborate with families, Oakland High has several **family-inclusive and family-led committees** through which family members participate in school decision-making. These efforts are illustrative of the active family engagement pillar of the community schools approach. For example, there is a group of parent leaders who call themselves the Wildcat Family Organization. This group meets monthly to bring together school families who would like to deepen their involvement with Oakland High. The Wildcat Family Organization helps engage families and provides information about school and community resources. In addition to the Wildcat Family Organization, the school site council (SSC), which develops the School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), provides an opportunity for family members to engage in school affairs and to play a role in decision-making. The voting body of the SSC includes two parents and two students as well as teachers and classified staff. In addition to school budgeting and SPSA decisions, membership on the SSC offers opportunities for students and families to participate in teacher hiring committees and to address the needs of specific student subgroups. For example, the SSC has a subcommittee that was established to ensure that the school serves the needs of English learners and families.

Though Oakland High has family collaboration structures in place, parents expressed that this was an area for improvement and felt that the school fell short of engaging families in authentic, meaningful ways. For instance, some felt that Oakland High was not doing enough to keep families informed about school happenings. As one parent explained:

> If I didn't sit in the meetings, I wouldn't know what's [happening] on campus. We had to push for a newsletter just to get that. I have been pushing for that since my daughter's freshman year. I think people were pushing before that—before I even got there.

The frustrations expressed by the parents suggest that Oakland High will need to utilize additional strategies to effectively engage families.

Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment

In addition to its efforts to build relationships among school stakeholders, Oakland High has sought to create a school environment in which students feel a sense of safety and belonging. Some of this has been done through the school's efforts to implement various **culturally affirming extracurricular opportunities**. For example, Oakland High has implemented the district's African American Male Achievement program, which supports a cohort of Black male students beginning in the 9th grade. In addition to providing an opportunity for these students to form close relationships

with each other, the program provides students in the cohort mentorship, as well as opportunities to build life and career skills and access to academic support. Additionally, Oakland High offers over 40 extracurricular clubs, such as the Black Student Union and the LGBTQIA Pride Club.

Oakland High also offers several **opportunities for student leadership**. For example, the school maintains a leadership class, open to all students, during which students help plan school events, such as multicultural fairs, dances, and rallies, and receive mentorship for participating in student government. Oakland High has partnered with Californians for Justice—a statewide youth organizing group that develops youth leaders and fights to improve the lives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students and families. Californians for Justice works with students to develop their civic leadership skills and creates opportunities for students to take on leadership roles, such as facilitating professional development sessions for teachers.

Additionally, Oakland High uses a **schoolwide behavioral system** called PROPS to emphasize prevention over punishment as another way to support a positive and safe school climate. PROPS (which stands for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) is tailored to Oakland High. Using PROPS as a schoolwide behavior system allows Oakland High to create shared norms and routines, thus promoting students' self-regulation through clear expectations and incentives rather than punitive consequences. When school norms and expectations are challenged or there is an incident that causes harm to members of the school community, these events are addressed using restorative approaches (described in the following section).

Oakland High uses a schoolwide behavioral system called PROPS to emphasize prevention over punishment as another way to support a positive and safe school climate.

Last, Oakland High has implemented several strategies to make the school a welcoming place for newcomer students. Oakland High has a full-time social worker who supports newcomer students and families in accessing resources and navigating the school system and other institutions. Oakland High also has a **Linked Learning pathway for newcomers**, called RISE (Recent Immigrant Support and Engagement), which allows the school to offer additional curricular supports for newcomer students, such as an enrichment class for students learning English.

Developing social and emotional skills

Oakland High teachers and staff **infuse social and emotional learning (SEL) throughout the school day**. Teachers and administrators shared that the beginning of the year is an especially important time to develop students' social and emotional skills and that the first month of school heavily emphasizes teaching students to work

collaboratively, interact with one another, and assess their own learning. Interviewees noted that this initial grounding in social and emotional development allows students to be more comfortable and to participate more fully in their classrooms.

This early attention to interpersonal skills and self-awareness supports collaborative learning, a pedagogical approach used frequently by teachers at Oakland High. For example, teachers explained that when students finish their work early, they are encouraged to offer help to their peers. As Fields explained, helping peers understand new concepts is beneficial to both students. The student who is working at a faster pace can now think through the following questions: What does it mean to be patient with somebody in this context? What does it mean to meet somebody where they're at? What does it mean to understand and re-explain this concept in ways that are different from the way that I explained it to myself? Fields also shared that the practice gives students more confidence to speak up when they need help. In the classroom, it is not unusual to hear the following: "Hey, I don't get this thing, and I need help. Can somebody help me out with this?" These practices can help students feel comfortable asking for support and expose students to other learning styles.

To provide students with opportunities to collaborate, some teachers assign **group tests and assignments**. Collaborative work provides opportunities to practice interpersonal skills and build metacognitive ability to reflect on learning practices. After completing a group project, students conduct self-assessments, evaluating how well their group members worked together. At least one teacher incorporated the group work assessment as part of students' final grade.

Teachers at Oakland High also used learning strategies to help **students direct their own learning**. For example, in a 9th-grade creative writing class, students take ownership of the direction of their writing assignments. The teacher grades students on an individualized rubric based on the progress the student makes from the beginning to the end of the year. In another class, students collate their work into a portfolio that highlights the work they are most proud of and that they think reflects their progress throughout the year.

In addition to these instructional practices that incorporate SEL opportunities, Oakland High staff utilize **restorative circles and conferences**. While Oakland High no longer has a restorative justice facilitator on staff, several teachers and staff members, including the CSM, have been trained in restorative approaches, and restorative practices remain in wide use throughout the school. Teachers reported using restorative circles in their classrooms to build community and to address interpersonal conflicts. Restorative conferences provide an opportunity for students and adults to share feelings, take responsibility for their actions, and coconstruct approaches to repairing any harm done, thus providing students with opportunities to practice interpersonal skills with the support of school adults.

Environmental Science Academy Welcome Assembly

As students enter the virtual Zoom room, they are excitedly greeted by teachers. The spring welcome assembly is for rising sophomores who will be joining the Environmental Science Academy pathway the following year. After the welcome, Chris Johnston, one of the pathway directors, begins showing students pictures of the activities they can participate in over the next 3 years as students in the pathway, such as whitewater rafting expeditions and overnight camping trips. He tells students about the community-based science research they will be doing independently, explaining, "From day one, we believe in all of you being responsible scholars." He also shares slides about student activism and volunteering opportunities. Johnston explains that the Environmental Science Academy creates these kinds of learning opportunities so students can figure out what they care about so they can advocate for the change they believe in.

Johnston then shares a slide with a picture of a graduation, telling the students that the pathway's teachers are very excited to see all the students graduate. He adds, "We also cannot wait to have an incredible amount of wonderful, memorable experiences between then and now. I hope these pictures have hinted at the experiences you'll be having with us here in the Environmental Science Academy." Students are then able to look at some of the classes they can take, such as different kinds of physical education (e.g., yoga), a leadership class, Ethnic Studies, Advanced Art, and Graphic Design. The slideshow illustrates the types of learning opportunities available to students during their time in the pathway.

Engaging students in rich learning and knowledge development

By creating learning opportunities in which students can explore issues of interest to them in school and community settings, Oakland High provides a curriculum that draws on young people's experiences and knowledge. To illustrate, instruction within the Environmental Science Academy pathway is focused on developing young people's leadership skills through a **student-centered and culturally sustaining curriculum**, which is enabled by the previously discussed autonomy that pathway teachers have to create their academic programming. Administrators at the school trust teachers to develop the best plans for their students, and, similarly, teachers trust their students to drive their own learning. As science teacher M Fields explained:

> A lot of our curriculum is focused on student-centered problems and student-centered leadership opportunities to solve those problems. I think that's one of the big things that makes Oakland High a community school. … In many cases, the curriculum at Oakland High is almost written as we go, in order to address problems that are cropping up throughout the year. … We'll address environmental problems that crop up in our neighborhoods and in our communities.

In addition to prioritizing student-centered learning, teachers in the Environmental Science Academy pathway believe that their job is to be culturally responsive and to help students understand who they are, what they care about, and how they can positively impact social issues that matter to them. At the assembly welcoming incoming students, one of the codirectors of the pathway said:

> We are the Environmental Science Academy, so obviously we care about the environment. We want all of you to be environmentalists. But, more importantly, we want you to figure out what you care about. So, if you want to be an activist to end the school-to-prison pipeline or fight for racial justice or end homelessness or fight for gender equality—whatever you feel passionately about—we want to help you become an ally, advocate, and activist for that cause. So that's one of our core missions.

To achieve their pedagogical and instructional aims, Environmental Science Academy teachers prioritize **project-based learning** as a pedagogical approach, which allows for collaborative engagement in learning as students explore a relevant question or problem. A strong example of this is the "lake class" taught by Fields. The class is designed around the ecology of Lake Merritt, a short walk from Oakland High's campus. In an activity made possible through a partnership with the Lake Merritt Boathouse, students embark on pontoon boats once a week to survey different areas of the lake for various water quality factors and to collect samples for testing. Students then study the samples to determine the likely causes of water pollution and contaminants. After determining the pollution sources, students study potential policy interventions to address the health of their community lake. At the culmination of the class, students develop their own interventions to address water quality, which they present to a mock city board made up of local scientists, advocates, and other industry professionals. Below, Fields describes one student's final project:

> He proposed and built a three-dimensional map, which identified that the golf course above the cemetery was a likely source of nitrogen phosphate pollution due to the amount of fertilizer that they use, and he pinpointed this by testing the tributaries that come through that area. Below the golf course is a big, open cemetery that has lot[s] of grass everywhere. … So the student proposed a replanting plan for the cemetery that included a native plant shrub forest that could soak up and absorb the nitrates and phosphates before they got to the lake.

The lake class represents an example of an extended, hands-on, student-led project. It also demonstrates how Environmental Science Academy teachers make environmental science relevant by focusing on the environment as the space in which students live, work, and play. The Environmental Science Academy curriculum frames the environment as not just the melting of the Arctic shelf or the extinction of rare birds but also conditions of the local ecosystem, including Lake Merritt, which is a stone's throw from the school campus. This framing of environmental

science also points to the school's commitment to cultural responsiveness, as it helps students understand why the environment might matter to an Oakland High student. Furthermore, this project-based work requires use of social and emotional skills, as it requires students to work collaboratively, communicate effectively, and manage and track learning as they engage in a project.

Integrating Linked Learning and Community School Approaches

In addition to becoming a full-service community schools district, Oakland Unified has implemented a wall-to-wall Linked Learning initiative for the district's high schools. Linked Learning is a systematic approach to preparing high school students for postsecondary life using career-themed pathways. Though separate district initiatives, the Linked Learning and community school approaches share similar aims. Both prioritize incorporating authentic, community-based learning strategies; using integrated supports to mitigate out-of-school barriers to learning and to increase the relevance and rigor of curriculum and instruction; and leveraging the expertise of community stakeholders to improve learning and workplace environments for students. Because of their shared aims, the Linked Learning and community school approaches can be implemented in integrative ways such that each approach supports and reinforces the other.

Oakland High, which has robust community school and Linked Learning approaches in place, illustrates the mutually reinforcing potential for these two approaches. For example, the development of Linked Learning pathways at Oakland High restructured the school from a large, comprehensive high school into a group of small learning communities. Each of these small learning communities is directed by its own leadership team that includes a case manager and a counselor. These teams meet regularly to identify students who are facing challenges, making it difficult for students to fall through the cracks. In this way, the Linked Learning pathways support the community schools approach by allowing staff to more effectively identify students in need of support and to connect those students with school resources.

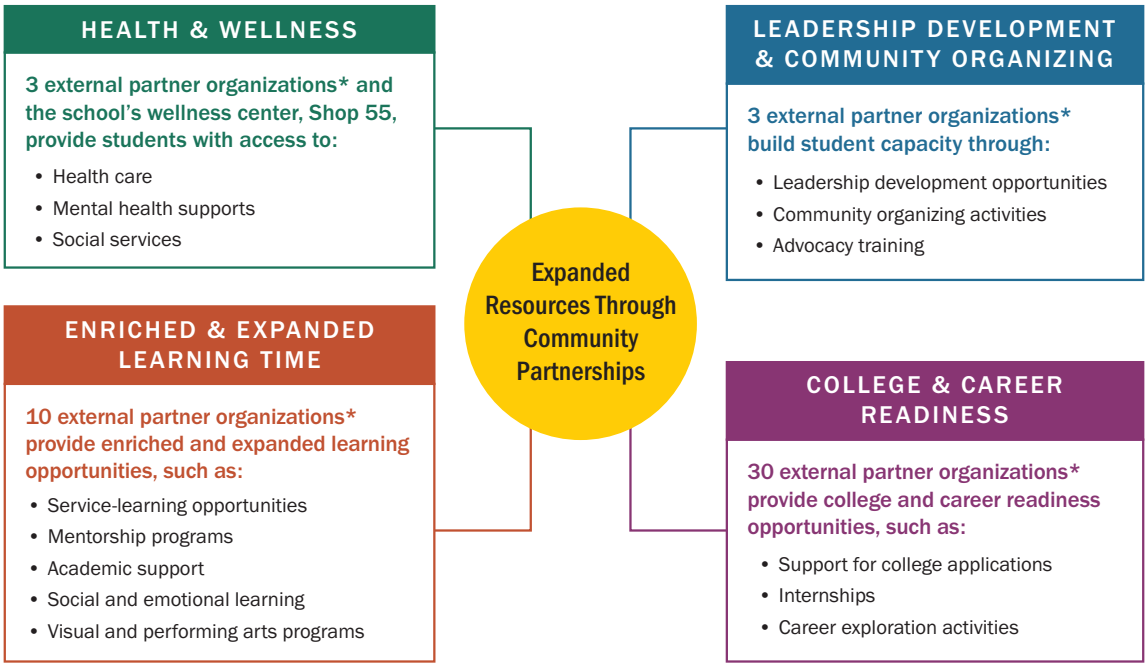
Similarly, the infrastructure that supports the community schools approach in place at Oakland High reinforces the success of the Linked Learning pathways. Rany Ath, the community school manager (CSM) at Oakland High, has extensive experience managing the school's relationships with a wide range of community partners, including those that provide college- and career-readiness programs and those that enrich pathway instruction. The CSM position and the infrastructure that Ath has developed to manage partnership relationships, such as the monthly partners meeting that she facilitates, ensure that there is an individual on campus who is responsible for the partnership work needed to support the community school and Linked Learning approaches.

The Oakland Unified staff we interviewed are aware of the potential for the Linked Learning and community school approaches to reinforce one another at the high school level and are beginning to explore systems and structures to promote collaboration among district staff focused on these initiatives.

Source: Linked Learning Alliance & UCLA Center for Community Schooling. (2021). *Linked Learning and community schools: Preparing all students for college, career, and civic life*.

The practices described at Oakland High illustrate what the instantiation of whole child education principles (see Figure 1 on page 3.) look like when they are integrated within a community school serving high school students.

Figure 4
External Partnerships at Oakland High School, 2020–21



Health and Wellness

1. Asian Health Services
2. East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC)
3. Lincoln

Enriched and Expanded Learning Time

1. Beats Rhymes and Life
2. BuildOn
3. Californians for Justice
4. East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC)
5. Lake Merritt Boathouse
6. Oakland Kids First
7. Oakland Services
8. Sierra Club
9. Summer Search
10. Unity Council

Leadership Development and Community Organizing

1. Californians for Justice
2. Oakland Kids First
3. Unity Council

College and Career Readiness

1. Accounting Career Awareness Program
2. Alameda County Health Care Services Agency
3. Alameda County Public Defender's Office
4. Alameda Health Systems
5. Anti Police-Terror Project
6. Central Legal
7. City of Oakland Fire Department
8. City of Oakland Waste Management
9. Community Works West RSVP
10. Deloitte
11. Designing Justice, Designing Spaces
12. Destination College Advising
13. Dream Corps
14. DreamWorks Studios
15. East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC)
16. East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD)
17. Five Keys
18. Holy Names Upward Bound
19. Insight Garden
20. Kaiser Permanente
21. KPMG (Accounting Firm)
22. Lever (Software Company)
23. Mills College Upward Bound
24. Oakland City Council
25. Pandora
26. Planting Justice
27. Recurly
28. Samuel Merritt University
29. UC Berkeley Pre-College Trio/ Talent Search Program
30. UC Berkeley Upward Bound

* Some partners provide services in multiple categories.

Source: Documentation provided by staff at Oakland High School. (2022).

District Infrastructure and School-Level Practice

Over time, Oakland Unified has sustained and built an infrastructure aligned with the district's vision and designed to utilize whole child educational practices and strategies grounded in the science of learning and development. Key aspects of district infrastructure include coordination at the county level, management of external partners, establishment of community school managers (CSMs) and Coordination of Services Teams (COSTs), support for professional development, and support for family engagement. At the school sites studied in this report, this district infrastructure allowed schools to implement key practices that support the whole child education described in the previous section. In this section, we summarize how the district infrastructure enabled schools to increase access to resources and supports for students and families, efficiently connect students and families with needed supports, improve their climate, and build and maintain relationships with families. Educators expressed that their schools' capacities to provide needed resources effectively, to improve their school climates, and to conduct extensive outreach to families allowed them to focus efforts on teaching and learning. In addition, this infrastructure allowed schools to quickly respond to and meet student needs during COVID-19.

Increased Access to a Coordinated, Integrated Support System

School sites studied for this report provided students with a wide range of resources and supports, including expanded and enriched learning opportunities, such as after-school programming, mental health services, and on-site health care offered through school-based health centers. Offering these types of integrated supports is a pillar of the community schools approach and a guiding principle of whole child school design. Several aspects of the district-level infrastructure, described above, come together to increase access to services and supports for students and their families.

The district's centralization of the partnership process has allowed schools in Oakland Unified to efficiently partner with a range of community partners that provide services that meet the needs of their school populations. (See Figures 2, 3, and 4 for an overview of partnerships in place at the study schools.) For example, all three schools work with several partners that provide expanded and enriched learning opportunities both during and beyond the traditional school day. At Bridges Academy, 140 students attend an after-school program provided through the school's lead partner, Girls Inc., which includes literacy instruction, homework help, and enrichment classes (music, art, and dance). Oakland High works with several partners to provide students with outdoor learning opportunities that they may not have otherwise, such as camping and whitewater rafting trips. School sites also partnered with community organizations to provide access to academic tutoring, flu vaccines, on-site dental services, mental health services such as therapy and counseling, and more.

In addition to streamlining the partnership process, the district's coordination with Alameda County has increased access to services through the creation of school-based health centers. Oakland High's long-standing partnerships with East Bay Asian Youth Center and Asian Health Services allow the school to offer services to students through its school-based health center, Shop 55. Through Shop 55, students can access services such as school nurse consultation, behavioral supports, reproductive health services, sports physicals, and mental health counseling. Additionally, students can go to the Asian Health Services main clinic for primary care and utilize the mobile dental clinic for on-site dental services. Urban Promise Academy (UPA) students have access to the Hawthorne Clinic, which is housed at a neighboring school.

District development and support of the CSM role facilitates increased access to services and supports, particularly because managing partnerships is one of the five core areas of work that the district has placed under the purview of CSMs. At the school sites included in this study, many, if not all, of the schools' partnerships are maintained by CSMs. Rany Ath, the CSM at Oakland High, describes some of the processes she oversees to manage school partnerships:

> At the start of each year, we sit down with every partner and reflect on the partnership from the year before, thinking about what additional support [they need], and go over their scope of work for the following year. We really try to find alignment between the gaps in needs at Oakland High and whether or not that partner has the capacity to meet that … [and] then coordinating the MOUs [memoranda of understanding] for all of our partners. And then throughout the school year, holding a monthly all-partners meeting, we all come together, do updates, have people troubleshoot what's [coming up] for them, and share resources.

School-site partnership management is a robust work stream, and district development and support of the CSM role ensures that schools have the capacity to do this work.

Not only has the district-level infrastructure increased the level of resources and services that are available to students and families, but it has also increased schools' capacities to connect students and family members with needed services through the districtwide implementation of the COSTs. Codeveloped by the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency and Oakland Unified, COSTs are now universally in place at schools in the district.

At each of the school sites included in this study, COSTs created an infrastructure and a systematic process for connecting students with resources to improve their mental, behavioral, and physical health as well as their academic achievement. Each of the schools has a referral process that utilizes templates provided by the district, which can be used by teachers, staff, or students. These referrals alert the COST

to challenges or issues that students are facing. In weekly or bimonthly meetings, COSTs determine the resources available at the school that are most appropriate for supporting students' needs.

Many of the students at Bridges Academy, UPA, and Oakland High faced material challenges rooted in systemic inequality and racism, such as food insecurity, housing instability, and a lack of available services due to immigration status. The COST system enables schools to help students overcome these challenges that can become barriers to their academic success. For example, UPA has connected approximately a third of its students with mental health service supports, such as individual and group counseling. All these students were referred to the school's COST, which then made needed services available to students through the school partners, such as with Wellness Together and La Clínica.

Managing the school's COST is another core area of CSM work, as outlined by Oakland Unified. As such, the district has supported CSMs in increasing their capacities to develop and sustain effective COSTs through professional learning opportunities and coaching. For example, Glendy Cordero, the CSM at UPA who facilitates her school's COST, explained that when she initially took on her role, she needed additional support to understand how to build a successful COST at her school. She reached out to Community Schools and Student Services staff, and they arranged for her to do observations at a school with an exemplary COST structure. "From experiences like that, I was able to create what we have in our school now," she explained.

There are still some challenges associated with the COST system. While COSTs were generally perceived as effective by school staff, in some cases, there are still not enough school-site resources to meet student needs. For example, the COST lead at Bridges Academy lamented that her school did not currently have a program or partnership in place to provide intervention services for students who needed additional mathematics support. This underscores a core aspect of the way COSTs function: COST systems are a coordinating mechanism, not an actual service. Therefore, a COST structure must work in tandem with a well-established set of partnerships that can address a wide range of student needs.

Improving School Climate to Create Environments That Support Safety, Positive Relationships, and Social and Emotional Development

District-level infrastructure and supports increased schools' capacities to provide welcoming and positive climates for students, a guiding principle of whole child school design. School staff shared that district support for COSTs and professional development opportunities, including training and coaching opportunities, allowed their schools to improve school climate.

Bridges Academy, in particular, has utilized a COST to systematically address behavior issues. Once a child at Bridges Academy has been referred to the COST because of behavioral challenges, Julia Robson, the COST lead, works closely with teachers to support that student. She works with referring teachers to determine the underlying causes of the behavior and, if needed, collaborates with the Student Success Team (SST) to include families in behavior plans and connect students with mental health services. The SST can also support a teacher in developing skills to support students. Most often, Robson and the referring teacher work with the student to create an individual incentive system, through which the student is encouraged to behave because they have chosen incentives that are meaningful to them.

School staff indicated that district coaching and training have allowed their schools to improve culture and climate in ways that support student well-being and create more encouraging environments for learning. At Bridges Academy, the district provided a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) coach to help Robson, who is trained in both restorative justice and PBIS, develop its PBIS system. PBIS at Bridges Academy is foundational to the school's approach to creating a positive school climate. The school has created a matrix that clarifies what it looks like to be safe, respectful, and responsible in each area of the school (playground, office, hallways, cafeteria, etc.), and teachers explicitly model for students what safe, respectful, and responsible behavior looks like in each of these places. Interviewees at the school shared that the PBIS system—developed with the support of the district coach—substantially improved the culture of the school and reduced the number of behavior incidents at the school.

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Additionally, the use of restorative justice practices, in place at all three of the schools included in this study, was made possible because of training and resources provided by the district. At Bridges Academy, restorative justice practices are used mainly to support conflict resolution through restorative conferences facilitated by the culture and climate teacher on special assignment. UPA employs a restorative justice facilitator, as well as a culture keeper who leads the school's Culture Team. These staff members focus on maintaining a positive school culture and developing students' problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. Oakland High has a school-based team, made up of administrators, counselors, and the CSM, which supports staff to utilize restorative practices that build community and address behavioral issues.

Building Relationships With Families

The district's attention and commitment to supporting meaningful family engagement has had tangible effects on the three schools included in this study. Working in close partnership with families requires resources, personnel, and capacity building. Interviews with school staff suggested that district support for family engagement has strengthened schools' efforts to make families feel like welcome members of the school community and supported schools to include family members in school-site governance and decision-making.

CSMs are intensely focused on building relationships with families. As previously described, the district has included family engagement as one of the five core areas of work that fall under the purview of the CSM. At the three school sites included in this study, the CSMs have deep ties with their school communities and have developed long-standing relationships with families. For example, Cordero, the CSM at UPA, was introduced to the school community when her daughter began 6th grade there over 15 years ago. Similarly, Ath, the CSM at Oakland High, is an alumna of Oakland High and has worked with the school in various capacities for 13 years. Their long-standing tenure at their school sites has allowed them to develop and maintain strong relationships with families and community agencies.

Additionally, the very presence of the CSM position is what allows schools to do extensive outreach to families. For example, the CSM at UPA spends a great deal of her time on the phone with family members. As Principal Tierre Mesa explained, "Glendy is on the phone all the time and has built this feeling of family at the school. Our families know who they can go to for information and support, and they know Glendy's number." This type of family communication is necessary because "a lot of the district's forms of communication don't land well with our families. And it's not just language; there's a lot of barriers, and so having that personal touch [makes a difference]," said Mesa. Extensive family outreach requires an enormous amount of work, and it is possible because of the CSM position.

Schools also invite family members to participate in parent–teacher home visits and in culturally responsive family engagement events. For example, after receiving district-led training on parent–teacher home visits, several teachers at Bridges Academy began using home visits to build positive relationships with students and family members. Teachers explained that these visits allowed them to see their students in a new context and better understand their lives outside of school. At UPA and Bridges Academy, family members are invited to special events throughout the school year, such as a Cinco de Mayo celebration and a multicultural festival. Rosana Covarrubias, the CSM at Bridges Academy, planned the multicultural event with the help of the district family engagement liaison assigned to her school and network. A parent from Bridges Academy shared that events like these contribute to making family members feel included in the school community.

Including families in school governance is a district priority, and all three schools in our study utilized several approaches to include parents in school decision-making. As described above, California has established a statewide requirement that each school have a school site council (SSC) that includes parents. As a result, SSCs were in place at all three case study schools and provided a concrete opportunity for family members to participate in school leadership and governance.

While the SSCs undeniably offer opportunities for family leadership, some parents felt that the presence of an SSC was not enough to ensure that families were informed about and included in school decisions. At Oakland High, for example, parents expressed that it was difficult to stay informed about what was happening at the school and that parent priorities were not always taken seriously. These critiques suggest that while the SSC is a structure that can nurture meaningful family inclusion, it must be implemented thoughtfully and accompanied by other engagement practices to do so.

However, the districtwide emphasis on engaging families in meaningful ways has spurred additional, innovative family engagement efforts at these school sites. Bridges Academy, for example, used an extensive family engagement process to make a landmark decision about its instructional program (see "Engaging Family Members as Decision-Makers" on page 36). Additionally, UPA recently launched a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Council. The JEDI Council is made up of parents, students, and school staff and is a decision-making body at the school. To build their capacity, council members receive leadership training from a nonprofit called Oakland Reach on topics such as school budgeting and accountability systems.

As Mesa explained, the mission of the JEDI Council is "to make all students and family members of the UPA community feel respected, seen, and heard. We want to make sure that all student and family voices are present when making decisions that impact the whole school community." Mesa envisions this group as one that will function independently from the school administration so that it can better hold the administration accountable to families and students.

Educator Focus on Providing Learning Experiences

Increased access to needed resources, coordination of services, improved school climate, and engagement with families are tangible benefits in and of themselves. However, at these school sites, educators expressed that their schools' abilities to address these areas allowed them to focus on pedagogy and instruction. Below, a teacher from UPA describes the way that UPA provided services for a student who lost their father and explains how the infrastructure in place at her school allowed her to maintain her focus on classroom instruction:

> The clinic immediately was able to offer support when it came to grief counseling. … I'm really proud of that aspect of our school culture and school community, because I've worked at other schools that were not community

> schools in that way and did not have that kind of support … and what ends up happening [is that] teachers end up having to try to figure out how to do some of that work or provide some of that support when that's not our scope of work. … That is a whole other job, right? So being able to have that kind of approach at the school means that no one person has to hold it, and no one teacher needs to feel responsible for addressing all of those needs that are coming up around learning.

This teacher articulates an invaluable benefit of the supports that are made possible by the district's infrastructure and policies. Not only are students and families provided with greater access to and coordination of services, as well as an improved school climate that emphasizes a home and school connection, but the structures and processes incorporated into schools that facilitate these benefits also allow teachers to focus on pedagogy and instruction.

District Community School Supports in Action: Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The community schools approach is designed to meet the needs of the whole child by supporting student success and well-being both in and out of school, the importance of which has perhaps never been more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant school closures. The at-home conditions that impacted students' abilities to participate in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic posed an extreme challenge for districts and schools across the country. Community schools in Oakland Unified were fortunately able to lean into their existing infrastructure, partnerships, and systems during a time of extreme hardship. As Ali Metzler, the Community School Leadership Coordinator at Oakland Unified, explained:

> COVID made our district fully embrace our community school focus because we were able to quickly pivot because of all the systems we had in place. … We transitioned immediately to virtual, tracked our highest-needs students, and ensured [access to] services.

This pivot allowed the district to support essential workers and increase student and family access to vital services and resources. For example, the district worked with after-school program providers to create learning hubs, in-person learning sites for high-need students and children of essential workers. Additionally, the operations team quickly developed a food pickup and distribution system, staffed by paid family members and volunteers, which provided meals for families at 16 sites throughout the district. Through partnerships established via its community schools initiative, the district also coordinated access to Wi-Fi hotspots and Chromebooks to support distance learning. By the end of July 2020, just several months into the pandemic, Oakland Unified had distributed nearly 4.5 million meals and over 18,000 Chromebooks to students and families.[58] Additionally, the district drew on partnerships, such as the Oakland Public Education Fund, to raise COVID-19 relief

funds for families. These funds, used to support families experiencing food and housing insecurity during the pandemic, were provided to schools to distribute to students' caregivers who had lost employment due to the pandemic or had limitations in accessing federal and state stimulus funds due to immigration status.

School-based health centers, which provide mental and physical health services for students, transitioned to telehealth support, enabling students and family members to continue receiving crucial services and medications. Three of the health centers remained open for in-person visits as well. Community Schools and Student Services (CSSS) also worked closely with Alameda County to coordinate COVID-19 testing and vaccine access for district students and families and to ensure that teachers and school staff had early access to vaccines. Critically, CSSS staff developed districtwide systems for tracking wellness, attendance, and family needs during the pandemic. This provided essential guidance for CSMs, who coordinated school-site outreach to families.

The three schools included in this study made extensive efforts to stay connected with families and connect them to needed support and resources throughout the pandemic. Using resources provided by the district, CSMs at Bridges Academy, UPA, and Oakland High led efforts to arrange virtual home visits and wellness checks with students and their families. At the height of the pandemic, Bridges Academy staff conducted wellness checks with every single family as frequently as once per week. Staff at all three school sites explained that wellness checks, which included acquiring sensitive information about family income, documentation status, and eligibility for stimulus funds, were possible because of trusting, long-standing relationships that were already in place between school staff, students, and families.

Wellness checks and virtual home visits allowed CSMs and school staff to better understand the types of support that their families needed and to target resources accordingly. Using information obtained through wellness checks, Bridges Academy, UPA, and Oakland High adjusted services and supports to help students and families during the pandemic. For example, UPA greatly expanded its food pantry program and began offering food delivery services for families who were not able to travel to the school. The expanded food pantry program served approximately 100 families a week during the spring of 2020. UPA also offered an 8-week course for family members, taught by the computer science teacher, focused on supporting students during remote learning.

School sites also made creative use of their after-school program staff during the period of remote learning. To illustrate, UPA and Bridges Academy incorporated after-school staff into the traditional school day to provide targeted, small-group learning opportunities. At the start of the pandemic, Bridges Academy worked with its after-school program staff to assess the reading levels of all students at the school.

Throughout the period of remote learning, struggling readers at the school met in small groups throughout the school day, led by after-school program staff, two to three times a week, for targeted literacy instruction.

Bridges Academy, UPA, and Oakland High launched highly successful fundraising campaigns to provide financial relief to families. As Ath, the CSM at Oakland High, explained:

> We started a relief fund, and since the pandemic started, we've distributed close to $130,000 to Oakland High families to support them financially. We wouldn't have been able to identify those families if it wasn't for the teachers and administrators. They're in contact with students who are confiding in them.

Parents we spoke with were deeply grateful for the level of care and attention that school staff provided throughout the pandemic. As a parent from Bridges Academy shared:

> Our school is a school of low-income families, so because of the pandemic, the principal organized support. She raised a lot of money, and she reached all the families [who needed help]. That was something that makes me see that the principal cares about the families—that they are well—especially in this pandemic.

Conclusion

There has been a substantial increase in available funding for community schools at the federal and state levels. For example, California recently invested $4.1 billion in the state-funded California Community Schools Partnership Program—the largest investment ever made in community schools.[59] Federal policymakers have increased investments both in full-service community schools and in services they deploy, such as health and mental health services for children.[60] Oakland Unified has received federal and state grant funding.[61] Increased levels of funding forecast an expansion of community schools and community school initiatives, both in California and across the country.

Findings

This study elevates findings that can inform community school implementation in a wide range of settings.

Oakland Unified has sustained its Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) initiative through leadership turnover and periods of lean funding by engaging a wide range of stakeholders, braiding varied funding sources, and enacting formal policy commitments that make community schools a stable part of the district infrastructure. Throughout the first decade of its community schools initiative, Oakland Unified saw five different superintendents and faced significant financial challenges. Despite these challenges, the district has maintained its commitment to a community schools vision, as evidenced by district strategic plans and other policies. Several factors helped Oakland Unified sustain its FSCS initiative. These included an extended visioning process that included a broad range of school and community actors; the blending and braiding of multiple state, federal, and philanthropic funding sources; policy documentation (including school board resolutions and strategic plans), which created institutional memory throughout leadership changes; and a master agreement between the district and the county, which outlined clear roles and held agencies accountable for their joint efforts.

Oakland Unified built its community schools initiative on whole child education principles that enabled schools to improve a range of conditions for student learning. Not every community schools initiative is explicitly driven by whole child education and development. However, from the outset, Oakland Unified embraced whole child education as a guiding principle of its community schools initiative. The principles of whole child education and a focus on equity formed the blueprint of the district's efforts, as reflected in its strategic plans and policy documents. The embracing of these principles has influenced district- and site-level community school implementation throughout the past decade; our study documents evidence of this focus in the district's professional development priorities; its family engagement efforts; and its initiatives, such as restorative justice and the African American Male Achievement initiative.

Oakland Unified developed district-level infrastructure that supported schools to implement community school approaches. The district partnered with county-level agencies, such as the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, helping to bolster the provision of integrated supports through cross-sector collaboration in schools so that students and families are well connected with the services they need. Additionally, the district has centralized the management of many partnerships. Effective partnerships require substantial work, including attention to relationship building, coordination, and management. Oakland Unified's centralization of the partnership process enables schools to provide more programs and services than they otherwise would be able to if they needed to negotiate relationships individually. Schools included in this study provide a wide range of on-site services and supports for students' families, including school-based health services, academic interventions, and mental health services.

Oakland Unified developed school-site roles and systems, such as the community school manager (CSM) and the Coordination of Services Team, to support community schools. Operating as a community school requires an expansion of school functions, which necessitates new norms, commitments, processes, structures, and work streams. Having dedicated personnel, such as a CSM or similar, allows schools to build the school-level infrastructure needed to support new processes, structures, and areas of work. In Oakland schools, CSMs are responsible for many aspects of community school functioning, including engaging families, providing attendance support, improving school culture, and managing school-level partnerships. The district plays an important part in bringing cohesion to the CSM role.

Oakland Unified has also made COSTs a flagship practice of its community schools. COSTs are school-site teams that systematically connect students and families with needed supports and services. The district has developed a districtwide COST structure and provided resources to schools, such as a COST toolkit. At the schools in our study, COSTs were essential for efficiently pairing students with mental, behavioral, and physical health supports as well as academic interventions.

Oakland Unified built staff capacity to implement community schools. Oakland Unified has provided professional development (e.g., coaching, training, professional learning communities) for CSMs and others in unique community school positions (e.g., newcomer social workers). School staff reported that this capacity building has been essential for their schools' abilities to function as community schools, has led to significant improvements in school culture and climate, and has facilitated essential supports for a growing population of newcomer students.

Oakland Unified developed common tools and processes to promote family engagement as part of its community schools initiative. In Oakland Unified, district and school leaders have expressed a vision for family and community engagement and have enacted structures for local decision-making that include students and

families. At the school sites in this study, staff utilized various strategies, including culturally affirming events, parent–teacher home visits, and provision of school information in families' home languages to engage family members and make them feel welcome in their school communities. Parents reported deep appreciation for these efforts. At the same time, not all family and community members feel included, informed, or empowered, and some criticized the school governance structures for not engaging family members in decision-making.

District- and school-level integration of community school supports allowed teachers to focus on improving curriculum and instruction. Educators interviewed for this study explained that the integrated services, as well as the processes for connecting students and families with resources, freed up teacher time to focus on whole child–aligned curriculum and pedagogy. This included project-based learning that incorporates contemporary and/or local topics; work-based opportunities that are central to Linked Learning pathways at the high school level; culturally affirming curriculum; and various approaches to infusing academic, social, and emotional learning throughout the school day.

Community schools in our study received district support for promoting positive relationships throughout their school communities. Schools in our study utilized various additional strategies to promote positive in-school relationships, such as family conferences, advisory systems, and Linked Learning pathways. Oakland Unified has also provided professional development to support a positive climate and positive in-school relationships; for example, the district provides support for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and restorative justice practices, approaches in place at each of this study's school sites. However, developing strong in-school relationships continues to be a growth area for secondary schools in our study. Student reports of school climate at the middle and high school levels suggest a need to continue developing strategies and practices that promote welcoming, inclusive school environments and trusting in-school relationships.

Implications for Schools and Districts

Oakland Unified's Full-Service Community Schools initiative illustrates how districts can sustain community school efforts over time, explicitly integrate whole child education and community school approaches, and support schools in functioning as community schools through the development of district- and school-level infrastructures. Findings from this study elevate key considerations that can inform community school implementation in a wide range of settings:

- **Sustaining community school initiatives.** Oakland Unified utilized various strategies to sustain its community schools initiative despite numerous challenges. Findings from this study suggest that districts adopting community school initiatives should consider systems and processes for enabling

broad-based support among school and community actors, diversifying funding sources, and formalizing plans and commitments through district policy as a part of planning for sustaining community school efforts.

- **Developing a district-level infrastructure to facilitate partnerships.** Districts with large numbers of community schools can develop an infrastructure that facilitates community school and whole child approaches at the school level by centralizing partnership processes that allow schools to offer integrated supports and by increasing cross-sector collaboration through county-level partnerships. Schools in this study offered a wide range of services to their students, such as increased access to physical and mental health services and after-school learning opportunities that complemented the traditional school day. The provision of these services was facilitated by district-level efforts that removed administrative burdens from schools, allowing them to work with large networks of community partners.
- **Linking whole child education and community school approaches.** Oakland Unified's vision for community schools explicitly links whole child education and community school approaches. The district provides an infrastructure that connects students with resources while enabling educators to center whole child educational approaches that attend to the range of student needs and areas of development. Personalized approaches, such as small learning communities through Linked Learning pathways, positive behavioral supports for students, and professional development and capacity building for school-level staff, are prioritized at the central level. Districts and schools can also invest in strategies such as restorative and educative approaches to discipline, student leadership opportunities, and advisories that promote students' sense of belonging and connection, particularly at the secondary level.
- **Developing school-level roles and structures that support service delivery.** Districts with large numbers of community schools can support schools by bringing coherence to staff roles (e.g., community school managers) that are needed to manage new work streams, such as managing school partnerships. Additionally, districts can support schools by developing universal systems that allow school teams to efficiently match students and families with needed resources, such as Coordination of Services Teams. Providing professional learning and networking for these service providers can allow them to learn common practices and expand their expertise by sharing what they have learned in their work and engaging in joint problem-solving.
- **Building the capacity of school staff to enable the school to function as a community school.** Because staff at community schools must embrace new structures, work streams, and dispositions, districts can support schools by building staff capacity through professional learning opportunities. Oakland Unified provides numerous opportunities for professional learning, including

coaching and mentorship for principals and other staff, interschool learning communities, and training on various topics related to student and family well-being (e.g., trauma-informed approaches and social and emotional learning). Schools in this study reported that these professional development opportunities supported them in functioning as community schools and in improving their school climates.

- **Engaging families in decision-making.** Enacting deep levels of family engagement for all families, as well as opportunities for shared school governance and decision-making, is challenging, and it may take time and continued effort to effect widespread, substantive change in practice. These practices can be supported through a district-level vision for family engagement and district supports that enable schools to introduce practices such as conferencing with teachers or advisors and the inclusion of family members in school decision-making.

The community schools approach is centered on a key principle of the science of learning and development and whole child education: that attending to students' holistic needs helps to further students' growth, learning, and well-being. Research has shown that community schools generate a range of positive outcomes, particularly among students from marginalized groups, including improvements in attendance, academic achievement, and graduation rates as well as reductions in racial and economic opportunity gaps.

Across the country, support for community schools has grown as policymakers, educators, and community members increasingly recognize that schools serve students and families best when they become central hubs of their communities. This understanding was underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted long-standing systemic inequities in schools and a need to focus on whole child education and supports.

Oakland Unified's Full-Service Community Schools initiative demonstrates the value of centralized support for community schools, including county-level coordination, partnership management, specialized personnel and teams, professional learning, and resources for family engagement These supports enabled schools to implement whole child educational practices and engender the community schools approach. The implications highlight promising lessons learned for education leaders looking to build, implement, and sustain high-quality community schools in policy and practice. Districts seeking to implement community schools can look to this existing initiative for lessons learned, site-level design strategies, and approaches to building district-level infrastructure that supports community schools.

Appendix A: Methodology

This case study investigated how the infrastructure and policies in the Oakland Unified School District (Oakland Unified) support the implementation and sustainability of high-quality community schools with whole child educational practices at their foundation. Findings from this study are intended to help policymakers and practitioners understand how key support personnel and approaches can enable effective site-based practices in community schools that support student learning and well-being. With these aims, the study was focused on the following three research questions:

1. What district-level infrastructure is in place to support community schools and whole child education?
2. How do community schools enact whole child educational practices?
    - How, if at all, do community schools build supportive environments that promote strong relationships, family partnerships, and a sense of safety and belonging for students?
    - How, if at all, do the instructional and pedagogical approaches in community schools connect to student experiences and identities, support conceptual understanding, and develop metacognition?
    - How, if at all, do community schools promote social and emotional development?
    - How, if at all, do community schools meet the holistic needs of students and families?
    - What do whole child educational practices look like in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures?
    - How, if at all, have whole child educational practices allowed community schools to respond effectively to student and family needs during the pandemic and resultant school closures?
3. How does the district-level infrastructure support the implementation of community schools and whole child education?
    - What types of technical assistance are available to community schools (funding, capacity building, coordination of services, etc.)?
    - How are different funding sources blended and braided to support the implementation of community schools and whole child education?
    - How does technical assistance and funding meet or not meet the needs of community schools?

- How, if at all, does the infrastructure in place facilitate community schools responsiveness to student and family needs amid the pandemic and resultant school closures?

Because the study focused on the ways policy can support the implementation of community school and whole child approaches, the research team used purposive sampling to identify information-rich cases.[62] Oakland Unified, which has a long-standing community schools initiative that explicitly centers whole child education, is an excellent place to examine the district-level infrastructure and policies that are designed to support community schools and whole child educational practices. Because Oakland has been a full-service community schools district for close to a decade, there are well-established systems, structures, and technical assistance in place to support community schools. Additionally, the district has moved the needle on several student achievement and engagement outcomes, making Oakland Unified a desirable context to examine the ways in which the district-level infrastructure can successfully support community schools.

This study also sought to understand how policies supported effective practices at the site level. To identify schools for deeper study, the research team identified community schools with an established range of whole child educational practices in place (e.g., student-centered instruction, integration of social and emotional learning) and a record of improvement across various outcome measures (attendance, chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, etc.). To identify schools that met these selection criteria, the team conducted informational interviews with experts in the field and consulted publications written about various schools throughout the district. We triangulated what we learned with publicly available data on school climate as well as student achievement and engagement outcomes. This process led us to identify Bridges Academy at Melrose (Bridges Academy), Urban Promise Academy (UPA), and Oakland High School (Oakland High) as school sites for study. We intentionally selected a school at the elementary, middle, and high school level to examine variation across schools that serve different grades with respect to district-level support for community school approaches and what the instantiation of school-level whole child educational practices looks like.

To answer the study's research questions, a two-person research team utilized a case study approach. Our study focuses on the ways that districts can support the implementation of community school models and whole child educational practices, phenomena that cannot be effectively examined apart from their political, social, and institutional contexts. In this way, our study was particularly well suited to a case study approach, which allows researchers to investigate real-life phenomena within a specific context using multiple data sources.[63] With its ability to examine processes and systems and its sensitivity to context, a case study approach was ideal for answering the "how" questions that guide our study. Additionally, this study drew from findings from an extensive 8-year longitudinal study of Oakland Unified's community schools initiative, conducted by one of this paper's authors, to provide rich context

for district community schools development over time. This robust background on Oakland Unified's community school development allowed the research team to triangulate findings from the three case study schools with trends and patterns across the district over the course of the initiative.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study took place between February and May 2021. Data sources for this study included interviews and focus groups, observations, documents, and publicly available administrative records.

Interviews and Focus Groups

The research team conducted a total of 30 interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders. At each school site, researchers interviewed principals and community school managers because of their roles in building school-level infrastructure to support community school approaches and whole child educational practices. We also conducted interviews with counselors and teachers to better understand what instructional practices and student supports look like in community schools. Additionally, we conducted a focus group with family member leaders at each school; focus group protocols included questions about participants' impressions of their schools and their schools' efforts to include family members in school decision-making. Lastly, we conducted four interviews with district staff and three interviews with community organizers and staff at community-based organizations that work closely with the district.

To identify interviewees, the research team engaged in varied recruitment processes. Family members were purposefully recruited. The research team worked with community school managers to identify and recruit family members to participate in focus groups. Because interviews included questions about shared leadership and decision-making, researchers asked the community school managers to identify active members of the school community. For educators, researchers engaged in broader recruitment approaches. At Bridges Academy and UPA, all teachers were invited to participate in interviews. Because of Oakland High School's large size, we bounded our data collection to one of the school's 9th-grade "families" and Linked Learning pathways and invited all teachers in that family or pathway to participate in an interview. Administrators, community school managers, counselors, and district officials were also purposively identified and recruited because of their unique positions, responsibilities, and closeness to the community schools initiative and its implementation.

Table A1
Study Interviewees and Focus Group Participants

Role	Number of interviews / focus groups
Principals	6
Community school managers	3
Counselors	3
Teachers	8
Family member focus groups	3 (Included a total of 9 parents across all focus groups)
District leadership	4
Community partners and advocates	3

Source: Learning Policy Institute. (2022).

Interviews with school staff included questions about curriculum and pedagogy; opportunities for collaboration and shared decision-making among teachers and family members; integrated supports; strategies for supporting students' social and emotional development; practices used to create a safe and welcoming school environment; structures, processes, and systems for engaging with external partners; and district-level services and supports for schools. Researchers also asked school staff to discuss challenges encountered in the process of implementing community school approaches and whole child educational practices. Family member focus groups focused on participants' impressions of their schools as well as their involvement in school activities and decision-making. Interviews with district staff focused on district organization, staffing, and funding as well as district-level supports and services for schools. Lastly, interviews with community-based organization staff and organizers primarily focused on participant impressions of stakeholder involvement in the community schools initiative, the successes and challenges of the initiative, and how the initiative has attended to equity and inclusion for families and students.

Interviews and focus groups were semi-structured and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Due to the pandemic and resultant school closures, all interviews and focus groups were conducted virtually. With permission from participants, all interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed.

Observation

The research team observed approximately 20 hours of school events and activities as well as district-led meetings and professional learning community sessions. All observations were conducted virtually. At the school sites, researchers observed a variety of activities, including school assemblies, classroom instruction, school site council meetings, parent meetings, school team meetings, professional development opportunities for teachers, Coordination of Services Team (COST) meetings, and meetings convening external school partners. At the district level, researchers observed two professional learning community sessions facilitated by district staff; one session was for community school managers, and the other was for social workers who work specifically with newcomer students.

Attendance at these events provided insight into the schools' instantiation of community school approaches and whole child educational practices and allowed researchers to triangulate data obtained from interviews, focus groups, and relevant documentation. Raw field notes were taken during observations and converted into narrative field notes within 1 to 2 days of the observation.

Documents and Administrative Records

In addition to interviews and observation, researchers collected relevant school- and district-level documentation. This documentation included materials and documents such as mission and vision statements, classroom handouts, external partner directories, professional development calendars, school meeting agendas, and templates for COST and school-based health center referral forms. These documents allowed researchers to better understand what they observed at school events and activities and provided a source of triangulation for information retrieved from interviews, focus groups, and observations.

Because the study focused on district-level support for community school and whole child educational approaches, researchers also amassed and reviewed a large collection of documents from the district and county, including the following:

- the district's two most recent strategic plans (2020–23 and 2021–24);
- annual district budgets (as prepared for Board of Education meetings) as well as a "funding narrative" that describes federal, state, local, and philanthropic investments in the district's community schools initiative from 2009 through 2020;
- Oakland Unified's master agreement with Alameda County;
- family engagement materials, such as a family engagement theory of action, a family and community engagement rubric, and standards for meaningful family engagement;
- Oakland Unified's wellness policy;

- documentation of social and emotional learning (SEL) programming and services, such as an SEL playbook and PreK through 12th-grade SEL standards;
- district presentation materials on Oakland Unified's community schools initiative;
- Oakland Unified's Whole School Restorative Justice Implementation Guide; and
- Alameda Health Care Services Agency reports on school-based health initiatives and school-based health center models.

In addition to these documents, the research team accessed publicly available school- and district-level data on student demographics as well as student engagement and achievement outcomes. Researchers reviewed these documents to better understand the district-level infrastructure and policies in place to support schools in adopting and sustaining community school approaches and whole child educational practices.

Data Analysis

Researchers used a multistep process to analyze data. First, they created a preliminary codebook based on principles of whole child education and community school pillars. Researchers then independently analyzed and compared their code applications to create inter-rater reliability and to assess the clarity and utility of initial codes. Throughout this process, researchers deleted, added, and refined codes and code definitions to minimize redundancy and ensure that salient themes were captured.

Once the codebook was established, researchers uploaded all interview and focus group transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documentation into Dedoose, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program, to facilitate the coding process. As the researchers coded the full data set, they wrote several analytic memos focused on the study's research questions. The analytic memos described community school approaches and whole child educational practices across the school sites; key aspects of district policy, infrastructure, and supports for schools; and external stakeholder perspectives on Oakland Unified's community schools initiative. Researcher memos also noted data points that needed further clarification and follow-up data collection activities to be conducted with school staff and/or district staff. Researchers used the memos to draft outlines, which became the basis of this report.

Appendix B: Oakland Unified Family Engagement Theory of Action

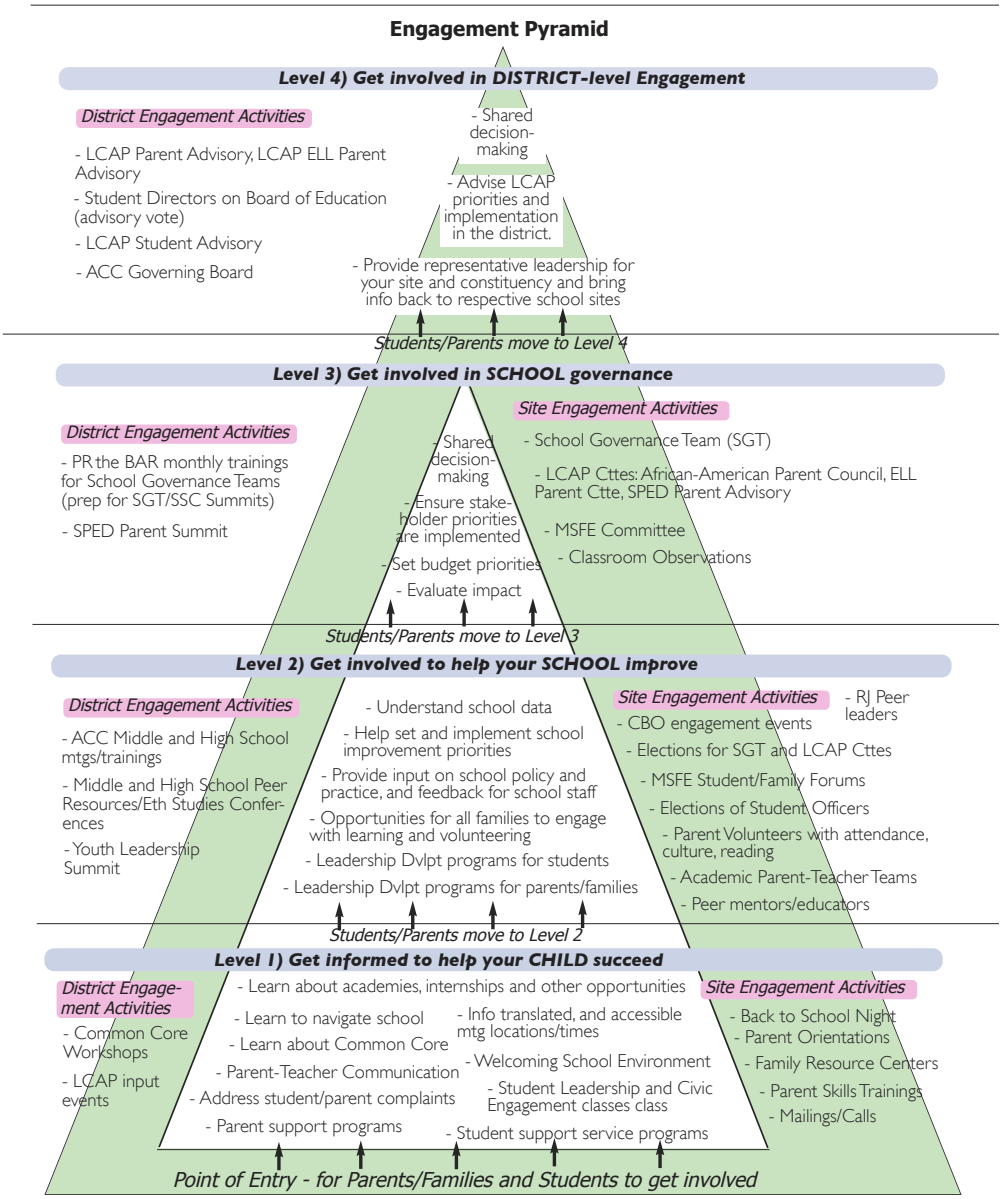
OUSD Student and Family Engagement Theory of Action

Engaging students and families to increase equity by improving school culture, student achievement and college readiness.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS & STUDENT SERVICES

OUSD Engagement Goals

- Increase representation from school sites on district engagement bodies
- At School Sites, increase representation and participation of students and families from under-represented and underserved communities.
- At School Sites, establish shared governance bodies in compliance with LCFF, MSFE Standards, Core Waiver
- At School Sites, engage more students and families from under-represented/underserved communities in school improvement efforts.
- Align school-led and CBO-led engagement efforts at school sites, towards mutual school improvement goals.



Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022). https://www.ousd.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=13059&dataid=10508&FileName=0USD%20Engagement%20Theory%20of%20Action.pdf

Appendix C: Oakland Unified Standards for Meaningful Engagement

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Community Schools, Thriving Students

Standards for Meaningful Family Engagement

Standard 1: Parent/Caregiver Education Program
Families are supported with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.

Standard 2: Communication with Parent/Caregiver
Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Standard 3: Parent Volunteering Program
Families are actively involved as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.

Standard 4: Learning at Home
Families are involved with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions.

Standard 5: Shared Power and Decision Making
Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Standard 6: Community Collaboration & Resources
Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

Vision
Through meaningful family engagement, we envision a transformed school system that has directly confronted and actively addressed inequity and injustice so that every OUSD student graduates and becomes a fully engaged member of our community.

Mission
The mission of meaningful family engagement is to inspire, engage, and support the students, families, and communities of OUSD to become authentic co-owners of our schools who share responsibility for every student becoming college and career ready. Through community organizing, and by building OUSD capacity, we will expand participation in learning, leadership, and advocacy that results in high levels of academic achievement and life opportunities for individual students, and for entire school communities.

Values
- We value the unique and diverse experiences of families in our community.
- We value engaging with students and families with love, care, compassion, and respect.
- We value students as leaders and agents of change. We value family members as leaders and agents of change.
- We value authentic democratic decision-making where students, families, and communities are equal partners.
- We value self-determination with community and family empowerment.
- We value bridging OUSD staff with students, families, and communities to engage in healthy struggle for positive change.

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Appendix D: Oakland Unified Rubric for Evaluating School-Site Family Engagement

Standard 1: Parent/Caregiver Education Programs

Schools effectively equip all families with the skills and tools needed to fully support the academic success f their child. This includes supporting parents with parenting skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and an how to increase academic performance through learning at home.

School provides parent education that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school, including age-appropriate information on developing home conditions or environments that support learning. School ensures that parents of high need students receive parent education and support.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
1. Parents of underperforming students are offered parent education and support to increase the achievement of their child. 2. School informs parents about its plan to be more inclusive of all families and develops and implements strategies for improvement. 3. Schools offer information for parents about: a. the multiple ways they can be involved at their child's school b. ways they can support their child's academic progress at home. 4. School staff holds meetings at school to give parents and staff an opportunity to share expectations for student learning. 5. School creates and implements a family engagement plan that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school, including age-appropriate information on developing home conditions or environments that support learning. It is made available to PTA/parent organizations. 6. There is a designated staff member who helps teachers connect to families and bridge the barriers of language and culture. 7. Parent education and resources are available to those families that can attend workshops or meetings at the school site. 8. Provide orientation for new parents in addition to workshops and tools for families that support families' understanding of student data, state standards, and learning goals.	1. Parents of underperforming students receive parent education and support to increase the achievement of their child. Progress is monitored and resources are adjusted as needed. 2. School asks parents how they can be more inclusive of all families and develops and strategies for improvement. 3. Schools offer training and education for parents to increase their: a. leadership skills b. knowledge of the multiple ways they can be involved at their child's school c. knowledge of ways they can support their child's academic progress at home. 4. School staff holds meetings at school to give parents and staff an opportunity to share expectations for student learning and follow up to determine if those expectations are being met. 5. School staff and parents create and implement a family engagement plan that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school, including age-appropriate information on developing home conditions or environments that support learning. It is made available to all parents. A calendar of the years' events distributed to all parents. Participant evaluations are collected after each activity, event or workshop. 6. There is a designated staff member who helps teachers connect to families and coordinates parent engagement efforts at that school 7. Parent education is accessible to all families. Workshops and resources are offered at the school site, in the community, and in families' homes 8. Provide multiple opportunities for parents to attend workshops and tools that support families' understanding of student data, state standards, and learning goals.	1. Parents of underperforming students receive parent education and support. Progress is monitored and resources are adjusted as needed. There is positive data linked to these support systems. 2. School asks parents how they can be more inclusive of all families and develops and implements successful strategies for improvement. 3. Most parents at the school are actively engaged in: a. leadership opportunities b. supporting the school c. supporting their child's academic progress at home. 4. School staff visits homes or holds neighborhood meetings to give parents and staff an opportunity to share expectations for student learning and follow up to determine if those expectations are being met. 5. School staff and parents create and implement a family engagement plan that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school, including age-appropriate information on developing home conditions or environments that support learning. It is made available to all parents. A calendar of the years' events distributed to all parents. Participant evaluations are used to improve parent engagement efforts. 6. There is a parent liaison at the school who coordinates all parent engagement efforts at that school and is responsible for making sure the parent engagement plan is implemented. 7. Families of high need students regularly participate in parent education opportunities that are offered at the school site, in the community, and in families' homes. 8. Train parent leaders to facilitate workshops and provide tools for families that support families' understanding of student data, state standards, and learning goals.

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 1: Parent/Caregiver Education Programs

Below are the support systems, resources, programming, and skills that are needed for each category.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
Programming: • Parent Education Workshops offered throughout the year (at least 5) **Resources/Tools:** • Parent engagement plan outlining all goals, activities, and outcomes. • Designated staff member responsible for coordinating and/or providing translation • Designated staff member that is responsible for coordinating and/or presenting parent engagement workshops/activities. • A document that goes home to all families that explains ways to be involved in and out of school • Parent education materials/curriculum presented by staff or outside organization • Designated area in school where parents can access parent engagement/involvement materials • Benchmark data available to teachers and other designated staff to be used to give parents strategies for how they can support improvement at home. **Professional Development:** • Staff development on how to partner with all families, particularly traditionally uninvolved families. • Staff development on creating action plans with parents that support academic improvement.	**Additional Programming:** • Parent education curriculum offered to parents that prepares them to partner with the school • Case management program to monitor the progress of underperforming students whose parents have been involved in parent education programming. • School leadership training for parents • Action Team for Partnership (made up of staff and parents) responsible for coordinating and implementing parent engagement efforts. **Additional Resources/Tools:** • Designated staff member or Parent Liaison responsible for coordinating parent engagement efforts. • System for documenting the progress of students whose parents have been involved in parent engagement programming • Relationship with local community centers, churches or other venues that can be used to hold community meetings • Parent education bulletin board with parent education opportunities **Additional Professional Development:** • Ongoing staff development on how to partner with all families, particularly traditionally uninvolved families. • Staff development on implementation strategies for the parent engagement plan	**Additional Resources/Tools:** • Full time Parent Liaison **Additional Professional Development:** • Staff development on conducting home visits
District Support: • Providing clear budget for parent education • Providing support and professional development opportunities to school-based staff on family engagement and education curriculum, including: best practices, outreach and facilitation skills • Provide parent education content/curriculum that schools can use parent engagement in the academic process. • Provide parent-friendly content standards and materials and training on how to reinforce learning at home. • Provide leadership training for parents		

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 2: Communication with Parent/Caregiver - Accessibility

Families and school staff have trusting relationships and engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning. There is a welcoming and engaging climate with strong relationships and communications between families and staff.

The school ensures that all communication (written, non-print and otherwise) with parents and caregivers from the school site is clear, readable, translated as needed, and accessible to all ranges of literacy and comprehension. There are multiple communications paths used to inform parents about what is happening at school. Parents can easily contact teachers and administration with information and questions about their children. Parents are welcomed into the classroom to observe learning.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
1. School produces a monthly newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips. 2. School has a website that is used to communicate with parents regarding events, school programming and other general information. 3. All teachers have a school email address that they make available for communication with parents. 4. Principal is present at PTA/ELAC/SSC meetings to share information about student achievement and to encourage partnership between home and school. 5. Parents are invited into the classroom for special events to see what their child is learning (i.e. Back to School Night, Open House) via newsletters at the beginning of the year. 6. FRC meets with the school to determine what District level support systems are needed. 7. School staff maintains a parent involvement bulletin board with information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips. 8. Written and verbal communication is provided in the language of the parents and the school provides translators as needed 9. Principal has established office hours to meet with parents	1. School produces a bi-weekly newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips. 2. The school website is updated twice per year with current information. The website provides information in multiple languages. 3. Teachers, counselors, and administrators regularly use email and/or the school website to communicate with parents. 4. Principal is present at PTA/ELAC/SSC meetings **and** holds monthly Coffee Chats to provide information about student achievement and to encourage partnership between home and school. 5. Consistent messaging to parents that they are welcomed in the classroom. Include procedures for classroom visits in newsletters, flyers, auto-dial, and at all meetings throughout the school year. 6. A teacher liaison is designated to facilitate communication and partnership between the FRC and teaching staff. 7. School staff regularly updates a parent involvement bulletin board with information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips. 8. There is a designated staff that helps teachers connect to families and bridge barriers of language and culture. 9. Principal is accessible for scheduled meetings with groups of parents or individually at different times of the day.	1. School and parent volunteers produce a weekly newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips. 2. The school website is updated quarterly with current information. The website provides information in multiple languages. 3. Parents regularly use email and/or the school website to communicate with teachers, counselors, and administrators. 4. Principal is present at PTA/ELAC/SSC meetings **and** holds weekly Coffee Chats to provide information about student achievement and to encourage partnership between home and school. Parent participants represent all family backgrounds and cultures. 5. Parents are consistently encouraged to come into the classroom to see what their child is learning and are given the opportunity to follow up with questions and comments. 6. Regular meetings occur with teacher liaison who is designated to facilitate communication and partnership between the FRC and teaching staff 7. Parent volunteers design and regularly update a parent involvement bulletin board with information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips. 8. Communications always are provided in alternative forms for parents who do not speak or read English well, or need large type. 9. The principal personally welcomes families into the building and meets regularly with parents in small groups or one-on-one as needed. 10. Consistently review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communication

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 2: Communication with Parent/Caregiver - *Accessibility*

Below are the support systems, resources, programming, and skills that are needed for each category.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
Programming: • Teachers all agree to regularly update assignments and grades on parent portal **Resources/Tools:** • Designated staff member responsible for coordinating and/or providing translation • Designated staff to produce newsletter and flyers • Designated staff to translate all parent education materials • School-wide parent engagement calendar produced at the beginning of school year • Parent engagement plan outlining all goals, activities, and outcomes. • Parent friendly student data • Principal's office hours posted in main office **Professional Development:** • Staff training on AERIES • Learning Community content experts support site liaison with learning at home materials	**Programming:** • Action Team for Partnership (made up of staff and parents) responsible for coordinating and implementing parent engagement efforts. **Additional Resources/Tools:** • List of Coffee Chat topics included in parent engagement calendar. Designated staff to support Principal with planning and facilitation • Clearly posted messages welcoming parents to visit the school and classrooms with procedures • Regularly updated student work posted in the classroom • Parent Engagement bulletin board with flyers, newsletters and parents' rights information **Additional Professional Development:** • Staff development on creating a welcoming environment for families	**Resources/Tools:** • Parent Liaison • Regularly updated hall bulletin boards with student work • Parent volunteers and staff designated to help with school newsletter **Professional Development:** • Professional development on the background and cultures of families
District Support: • Partnering with community to fundraise and develop communication strategies and structures at school sites. • Promote parent portal • Regularly update parent portal to make it accessible and user friendly • District Parent Liaisons schedule regular meetings with school to support parent engagement planning and implementation • Communication Department updates school websites with submitted documents from the school		

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 2: Communication with Parent/Caregiver - Feedback

Families and school staff have trusting relationships and engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning. There is a welcoming and engaging climate with strong relationships and communications between families and staff.

There are clear two-way communication channels to share information about school climate and culture. The school informs families about the state of the school and the plan for improvement, and invites, families' feedback.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
1. PTA/parent group leaders complete annual survey to share information and concerns about student needs, reaction to school programs, school climate and culture and satisfaction with their involvement in school and at home. The results guide the development of parent involvement programs. 2. The school is in compliance with federal regulations for sharing performance information with families, but may be selective about the information it shares. 3. School establishes a system for receiving comments and suggestions from parents (i.e. suggestion/comment box) improvements are made.	1. All parents are asked to complete an annual survey, which is translated into multiple languages and communicated into multiple languages and communicated in various ways, including in person, online, in print, and by phone. The results guide the development of parent involvement programs. 2. Even if the school is struggling, the school is transparent and honest with families about how the school is doing and the strategies it is using to improve. The school holds a well-publicized meeting and send school performance information home to families in written form. 3. School establishes a system for receiving comments and suggestions from parents (i.e. suggestion/comment box). Improvements are made and published in writing (i.e. school newsletter)	1. All parents are asked to complete an annual pre- and post-survey, which is translated into multiple languages and communicated in various ways, including in person, online, in print and by phone. The results are reflected in the School Improvement Plan. 2. Even if the school is struggling, the school is transparent and honest with families about how the school is doing and the strategies it is using to improve. The school uses multiple, creative ways to ensure this information reaches all families and to check for understanding. 3. School establishes a system for receiving comments and suggestions from parents (i.e. suggestion/comment box). Staff, administration and parents work together to develop strategies for improvement.

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 2: Communication with Parent/Caregiver - *Feedback*

Below are the support systems, resources, programming, and skills that are needed for each category.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
Programming: • System for address parents' questions and concerns **Resources/Tools:** • Designated staff member responsible for coordinating and/or providing translation • Parent engagement plan outlining all goals, activities, and outcomes. • Designated staff to translate survey • Climate and culture survey • Access to federal regulations guidelines for sharing performance information with families. • Comment/suggestion box in main office(s) **Professional Development:** • Professional development on sharing School Improvement Plan with parents	**Additional Programming:** • System for responding to parents' questions and concerns (whole school and individually) • Action Team for Partnership (made up of staff and parents) responsible for coordinating and implementing parent engagement efforts. This includes responding to parent questions and concerns. **Additional Resources/Tools:** • Parent friendly School Improvement Plan	**Additional Professional Development:** • Professional development on involving parents in the development of a School Improvement Plan with parents
District Support: • Partnering with community to fundraise and develop communication strategies and structures at school sites.		

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 2: Communication with Parent/Caregiver – Structures and Policies

Families and school staff have trusting relationships and engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning. There is a welcoming and engaging climate with strong relationships and communications between families and staff.

There are clear procedures that are followed to resolve family concerns in a timely manner. There are clear two-way communication channels to share information about school policies and procedures.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
1. Create and implement policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about the curriculum, expectations for homework, and how parents can help. 2. Families' concerns or questions are respectfully responded to but not always in a timely manner. 3. School informs parents, using multiple communication paths, about the school's clearly defined policies and procedures. 4. Teachers share their classroom-specific homework policies at Back to School Night	1. Create and implement policies that require all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about the curriculum, expectations for homework, and how parents can help. 2. Families' concerns or questions are respectfully responded to in a timely manner. 3. School facilitates meetings to inform parents about the school policies and procedures and is available to address parents' questions and concerns. 4. There is a clearly defined, respectful homework policy, which is communicated to all parents. 5. Create structures that support consistent and frequent communication among the Family Resource Center, families, teachers, school program staff, and the principal 6. Clear policies and procedures for communicating with parents are established.	1. There is a school-wide, uniform policy that is used by all teachers to communicate (at least bi-weekly) with parents about the curriculum, expectations for homework, and how parents can help. 2. Families are encouraged to share concerns or questions. Families' concerns and questions are respectfully responded to in a timely manner. School staff engages families in collaborative problem-solving. 3. Most parents are aware of, and support the school policies and procedures. 4. There is a clearly defined, respectful homework policy, which is communicated to all parents. Parent feedback is encouraged. 5. Create, document and evaluate structures that support consistent and frequent communication among the Family Resource Center, families, teachers, school program staff, and the principal 6. Clear policies and procedures for communicating with parents are established and implemented school-wide.

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 2: Communication with Parent/Caregiver – *Structures and Policies*

Below are the support systems, resources, programming, and skills that are needed for each category.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
Programming: • Parent meeting to share school's policies and procedures (i.e. homework, behavior, cafeteria, etc.) • Regular Coffee/Principal Chats • Community Meetings **Resources/Tools:** • Designated staff member responsible for coordinating and/or providing translation • Parent engagement plan outlining all goals, activities, and outcomes. • School policies and procedures posted throughout the school. • Classroom homework policy made available to all parents. • Document clearly defining homework policy and ways parents can be involved in and out of school • School handbook outlining school's policies and procedures. • Comment/suggestion box in main office(s) • Document for staff providing tips and tools for effectively communicating and partnering with families **Professional Development:** • Staff development on school's policies and procedures	**Programming:** • Regularly scheduled meetings between school and FRC • Action Team for Partnership (made up of staff and parents) responsible for coordinating and implementing parent engagement efforts. **Resources/Tools:** • School website with policies and procedures • School wide homework policy made available to all parents • Parent Engagement bulletin board with policies and procedures **Professional Development:** • Staff development on creating a respectful homework policy and differentiation of homework • Staff development on communicating policies and procedures with families and students	**Programming:** • " Helping With Homework" workshop for parents
District Support: • Partnering with community to fundraise and develop communication strategies and structures at school sites.		

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 2: Communication with Parent/Caregiver- Building Relationships

Families and school staff have trusting relationships and engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning. There is a welcoming and engaging climate with strong relationships and communications between families and staff.

The school staff has strong, mutually respectful relationships with families. The school values families as important partners in their students' education. School staff works collaboratively with families to set goals and foster high expectations for student achievement. The school has a respectful, inclusive community in which families feel connected to one another. School staff is culturally competent and sensitive. School staff members are trained to effectively communicate information on school and classroom expectations, policies and procedures. Staff is trained to problem solve with families in positive ways.

1. School staff believes that parents can be effective partners and discusses ways to involve parents in the academic process. The school successfully reaches some families, but usually not able to reach the traditionally uninvolved families. 2. School shares with families its hopes and dreams for their students. 3. School expectations for student achievement are shared at the beginning of the year in newsletters, at Back-To-School Night, and at other beginning of the year events. Parent input is encouraged. 4. Parents are warmly welcomed upon entering the office. 5. Some parents (regardless of race, economics, or educational level) feel welcomed at school. This is evidenced through formal surveys and informal observations. 6. The principal is open and available for parents. Regular office hours are established. 7. The classroom teacher and principal have personally met most of the student's parents. 8. School staff affirms students' cultures and history in school resources, classroom lessons, and activities. 9. At the beginning of each year, teachers, staff, and principals are trained around the value and utility of family involvement and ways to build positive ties between school and home. 10. Teachers, staff and principals are given written information about how to communicate and problem solve with families in ways that strengthen partnerships between home and school.	1. School staff makes sustained efforts to engage all families. The school has made successful efforts to reach traditionally uninvolved families in the academic process. 2. School asks most parents their hopes and dreams for their student. 3. School expectations for student achievement are shared throughout the year, in a number of different ways and parent input is encouraged. 4. Parents are warmly welcomed in their home language upon entering the school grounds and office. Their needs and/or questions are promptly addressed. 5. Most parents (regardless of race, economics, or educational level) feel welcomed at school. This is evidenced through formal surveys and informal observations. 6. The principal is open and available for parents. Regular office hours are established and the principal also walks the halls and schoolyard, attends school events. 7. The classroom teacher and principal have personally met each student's parent. 8. Families and school staff work together to ensure that the school affirms students' cultures and history in school resources, classroom lessons, and activities. 9. There is ongoing training for teachers, staff and principals around the value and utility of family involvement. The school evaluates the success of strategies learned in trainings. 10. Teachers, staff and principals are formally trained to communicate and problem solve with families in ways that strengthen partnerships between home and school.	1. School is relentless in ensuring that every students' family is engaged in the success of their student. The school is creative in reaching all families regardless of their circumstances. 2. School asks all parents their hopes and dreams for their student and shares how the school helps parents reach their vision. 3. Parents meet with teachers to set high expectations for their student's achievement. Individualized learning plans are developed and monitored throughout the year. 4. Parents are warmly welcomed in their home language, by name, upon entering the school grounds and office. Their needs and/or questions are promptly addressed. 5. All parents (regardless of race, economics, or educational level) feel welcomed at school. This is evidenced through formal surveys and informal observations. 6. The principal is regularly outside and the beginning and end of the school day, greeting students and their families as they come and go. 7. The classroom teacher and principal have personally met each student's parent and know most by name. 8. Students' cultures and history is clearly represented in school resources, classroom lessons, and activities 9. Teachers, staff and principals are formally trained to communicate and problem solve with families in ways that strengthen partnerships between home and school. Ongoing evaluation and corrective feedback is provided.

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 2: Communication with Parent/Caregiver – *Building Relationships*

Below are the support systems, resources, programming, and skills that are needed for each category.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
Programming: • Regular Coffee/Principal Chat **Resources/Tools:** • Parent engagement plan outlining all goals, activities, and outcomes. • Parent Engagement Core Beliefs posted throughout school and distributed to parents • Welcome signs posted in front of school. Office location is clear. • Climate and Culture survey • Principal office hours posted • Culturally relevant curriculum • Suggestions for staff on how to communicate and problem solve with families • Communication log for each classroom and office • List of required communications with parents (parent–teacher conferences, weekly progress reports, etc.) **Professional Development:** • Staff discussions about how to make parent engagement efforts culturally relevant • Staff training on communicating with parents in a way that encourages partnership	**Programming:** • Action Team for Partnership (made up of staff and parents) responsible for coordinating and implementing parent engagement efforts. **Resources/Tools:** • Weekly newsletter • Bilingual office staff • Parent Engagement bulletin board with welcoming messages • Method for collecting and analyzing parent involvement data **Professional Development:** • Staff discussions about how to make curriculum and parent engagement efforts culturally relevant • Professional development for office staff on creating welcoming environment for families • Staff development on the value and utility of parent engagement	**Programming:** • Pre-conferences with parents to discuss their hopes and dreams for their students. **Resources/Tools:** • Weekly newsletter with parent engagement component **Professional Development:** • Significant professional development on cultural competency
District Support: • Partnering with community to fundraise and develop communication strategies and structures at school sites.		

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 3: Parent Volunteering Program is Welcoming and Structured

Families and school staff have trusting relationships and engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning. There is a welcoming and engaging climate with strong relationships and communications between families and staff.

Families are actively involved as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs. School welcomes all parents to volunteer their services in school or individual classrooms. There is a structured parent volunteer program that includes parents from all backgrounds.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
1. Parents are recruited on an event basis and usually in writing 2. School recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts in school newsletter 3. School encourages families and the community to be involved with the school in various ways (e.g. assist in classrooms, monitor halls, lead talks or activities, serve as audiences) 4. Parent volunteers have adequate and appropriate space to complete volunteer tasks at school. 5. Conducting annual surveys to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers to match their skills and talents with school and classroom needs. 6. Schools make sure parents understand how to successfully complete the tasks they are volunteering for. 7. School successfully recruits a small number of volunteers for most school events. These are often the same parents.	1. School posts a list of volunteer opportunities (bulletin board, newsletters, events) and actively recruits parent volunteers. 2. Parents are thanked publicly at an annual volunteer appreciation event. 3. School identifies and reaches out to families who are not involved at the school to identify interests, concerns and priorities. 4. School provides a parent or family room for volunteers and family members to meet and work, and to access resources about parenting, tutoring, and related topics. 5. Creates flexible volunteering opportunities and schedules, enabling employed parents to participate. 6. Training is provided for volunteers 7. Volunteers are visible in all school events 8. School keeps a record of parent volunteers (name, date, contact info., task)	1. The school has established a volunteer program to ensure that parents are in classrooms and at school events. 2. Parent volunteers are recognized monthly as well as at an annual volunteer appreciation event. 3. School is successful in involving traditionally uninvolved families in volunteer opportunities at the school. 4. Providing a parent or family room for volunteers and family members to meet. Assigning a school staff member to assist parents in accessing the resources they need. 5. School reduces barriers to parent participation by providing childcare, food and by addressing the needs of English language learners. 6. Parent leaders are trained in facilitation skills such as brainstorming, role-plays, and small-group activities. 7. There is a large and diverse number of volunteers that support school events. 8. School keeps a record of parent volunteers (name, date, contact info., task) 9. Each classroom (and office) has a room parent who is trained to support the teacher and the school. 10. School schedules special events at different times of the day and evening so that all families can attend as audiences

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 3: Parent Volunteering Program is Welcoming and Structured

Below are the support systems, resources, programming, and skills that are needed for each category.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
Resources/Tools: • Parent engagement plan outlining all goals, activities, and outcomes. • Designated staff member responsible for publicizing school events (flyers, auto-dial, etc.) • Parent volunteer log in each classroom and in office • Document with volunteer opportunities distributed at beginning of year. • Parent volunteer interest survey • Parent volunteer guidelines	**Programming:** • Parent volunteer training • Parent Appreciation Night **Resources/Tools:** • Parent Engagement bulletin board with volunteer opportunities • Method for collecting and analyzing parent volunteerism data • Designated staff member responsible for coordinating parent volunteer program • Parent room open to volunteers during limited hours • Food and childcare at evening parent events **Professional Development:** • Staff development on utilizing parent volunteers	**Programming:** • Parent leader facilitation trainings **Resources/Tools:** • Room Parents in each classroom • Parent room open during school hours • Parent Engagement bulletin board with volunteer recognitions • Food and childcare at each parent event **Professional Development:** •
District Support: • Conducting a general grade level, site-specific survey with the intention of identifying the interests, talents and availability of parents, so that a volunteer's skills can be effectively matched to suit the needs of the school and support the desire of family members to become more involved. • Designating a dedicated space for family members and community volunteers to meet, conduct trainings, work on projects, access resources, use computers, participate in workshops or tutoring that help them become more effective volunteers for their schools • Reducing barriers for parents to volunteer by providing transportation vouchers, childcare, and translation of all materials related to families at a level that accurately reflects the demographics of the school. • Holding an annual end of the year celebration honoring the parents and volunteers at our schools. The District Superintendent, and members of the School Board will host this event. (Principals will attend if logistically possible). • Supporting each school create a list of opportunities (i.e. assist in classrooms, monitor hallways, answer phones, copy papers, work in lunchrooms, etc.) for volunteer participation. This list should include activities that occur in both the morning, afternoon and evenings to accommodate working parents. • Supporting volunteer coordinators at sites to ensure that families/volunteers have completed necessary paperwork, follow sign-in procedures and have been instructed on the required skill set to help them be successful at their tasks. • Room parents • Training of parents		

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 4: Learning at Home

Families are involved with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions. The school climate and culture is respectful and culturally sensitive and welcomes all families to engage in the education of their child. The schools' programming and communications for family engagement are student- and learning- centered. The school provides guidance for families to effectively and regularly monitor their student's progress on academic goals. The school provides guidance for families to effectively and regularly reinforce and guide their student's learning. There are clear two-way communication channels to share information about student work, student needs (academic and behavioral) the curriculum, state tests, school and student results, and report cards.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
1. Folders with student work are sent home monthly for parent review and comment. 2. School staff and teachers provide general information on how families can support learning at home and on how they can create an environment conducive to learning. 3. Parents receive academic progress reports at least monthly. 4. Formal conferences with every parent/caregiver at least once a year 5. There is consistent written communication with families of students having academic or behavior problems and supports available. 6. For middle and high schools, school staff is responsive to families that seek information to help them make good decisions about their child's academic and career pathways. 7. Parents/families receive their child's CST scores, benchmark assessments, tests, report card grades, etc., and are provided with a written explanation.	1. Folders with student work is sent home weekly for parent review and comment. 2. School staff and teachers build the capacity of families to support what their students are learning at home by sending home suggestions, sharing resources and holding parent education and training events that are relevant to grade-level skills. 3. Parents receive academic progress reports at least monthly. Parents are informed of how to support learning at home. 4. Formal conferences with every parent/caregiver at least twice a year. 5. There is regular written and face-to-face communication with families of students having academic or behavior problems. Parents are personally connected to supports available and receive specific strategies for supporting their student at home. 6. For middle and high school students, school provides training for parents/families to help their children set academic goals and to have a say in the courses and programs available to them. 7. Parents/families are given information about their children's academic improvement areas based on CST scores, benchmark assessments, tests, report card grades, etc. Parents are given strategies to support their student's academic performance at home.	1. Folders with student work is sent home weekly for parent review and comment. Parents are regularly informed of how to support learning at home. 2. School staff and teachers build the capacity of families to support what their students are learning at home through modeling instruction strategies and inviting their participation in classroom learning. Teachers regularly suggest activities that parents can do at home to support their student's learning that are tailored to the student's specific needs and goals. There if follow-up and feedback. 3. Parents receive academic progress reports weekly. Parents are regularly informed of how to support learning at home. 4. Regular written and face-to-face communication with families of students having academic or behavior problems. Parents are personally connected to supports available. There is follow-up to evaluate growth. 5. Formal conferences with every parent/caregiver at least twice a year. Meetings include the support staff that provides services for the child. 6. For middle and high schools, programs and/or information are pro-actively available to and are used by families to help them make good decisions about their child's academic and career paths. 7. Parents/families are trained to identify their children's academic improvement areas based on CST scores, benchmark assessments, tests, report card grades, etc. Parents are given strategies to support their student's academic performance at home. 8. Parents/families are informed regarding English, Math, Social Studies, and Science grade level curriculum to support their children. School offers specific strategies needed to improve reading success. 9. School provides opportunities for parents/families to learn about college, careers, and post-secondary plans available to their children

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 4: Learning at Home

Below are the support systems, resources, programming, and skills that are needed for each category.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
Programming: • Family Math Night • Family Reading Night **Resources/Tools:** • Parent engagement plan outlining all goals, activities, and outcomes. • Learning at home activities to distribute to parents • Home/school folders • Monthly progress reports. More often for high need students. • Career pathway materials (secondary schools) • Parent friendly CST data	**Programming:** • Parent teacher conferences twice per year • Weekly folder distribution process **Resources/Tools:** • Learning at home component in school newsletter • Learning at home activities aligned with individual students' needs to distribute to parents • Weekly progress reports for high need students. • Designated staff member responsible for coordinating, copying and distributing information for weekly folders. • Benchmark data made available to parents	**Programming:** • Date with data nights for parents to provide parent friendly assessment information. • Training for parents on math and reading programs **Resources/Tools:** • Weekly progress reports
District Support: • Offering training for site staff to conduct parent workshops on Learning at Home		

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 5: Shared Power and Decision Making

Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Families have a voice in all decisions that affect children. School develops parent leadership and empowers them to partner in decision-making. School ensures that families participate in collaborative strategic planning for school improvement.

1=Emerging	2=Developing	3=Thriving
1. School has a school plan and program for family and community engagement. 2. Parent representatives are on the school site council, improvement team, or other committees with decision-making power and/or influence. 3. The school guides parent leaders to contact parents who are less involved for their ideas. 4. Has defined roles and responsibilities for FRC staff and family leaders 5. School has established a family engagement and leadership team that designs and coordinates parent engagement efforts at the school (ie. PTA subgroup). 6. Informs parents about the planning and improvement of school programs.	1. School develops the school's plan and program for family and community engagement with input from educators, parents, and partners and shares with all stakeholders in the school community. 2. Parent representatives, that represent the school and community, are on the school site council, improvement team, or other committees with decision-making power and/or influence 3. Recruits parent leaders for committees from all racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and other groups in the school. 4. Sets clear and measurable goals for the FRC that are aligned with the school wide vision and goals. 5. School has an active family engagement and leadership team that meets regularly and informs decisions about how to engage parents in the academic process. (Action Team for Partnership) 6. Involves parents in the planning and improvement of school programs 7. Has parents represented on district-level advisory council and committees	1. Refers to plan throughout the year to ensure that all family engagement activities are tied to its implementation. 2. Parent representatives, that represent the school and community, are on the school site council, improvement team, or other committees with decision-making power and/or influence. The decisions made by these bodies represent the views and needs of all families. 3. Maintains trained parent leaders for committees from diverse racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and other groups in the school. 4. Sets clear and measurable goals for the FRC that are aligned with the school wide vision and goals and evaluates the family engagement program on a regular basis to inform program improvement. 5. School has a diverse family engagement and leadership team that leads family engagement strategies at the school site. 6. Involves parents in organized, ongoing, and timely ways in the planning and improvement of school programs 7. Has an active, parent organization that represents diverse racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and other groups in the school, that monitors parent rights and responsibilities

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 5: Shared Power and Decision Making

Below are the support systems, resources, programming, and skills that are needed for each category.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
Programming: • PTA, SSC, ELAC **Resources/Tools:** • Parent engagement plan outlining all goals, activities, and outcomes. • Easily accessible and regularly updated parent contact information (including email addresses) and approval for other parents to use? • Written document for FRC that defines roles and responsibilities. • Current guidelines for governing PTA, SSC, ELAC and other parent organizations • Method for identifying traditionally uninvolved families • Family friendly school improvement plan **Professional Development:** • Communication and parent leadership and engagement training for parent leaders • Administrative professional development on the role and utility of parent organizations	**Programming:** • A plan to get input from all stakeholders (ie. Include review of plan to Staff, SSC, PTA meeting agendas) regarding family and community engagement plan and activities • School Improvement Team • Action Team for Partnership (made up of staff and parents) responsible for coordinating and implementing parent engagement efforts. **Resources/Tools:** • Designated staff member and parent leader (from each parent organization) responsible for recruiting and maintaining a diverse representation within each organization. • School calendar that includes all parent meetings distributed at the beginning of the year	**Programming:** • Parent leadership training
District Support: • Establishing a Parent Board (Regional Governance) with decision making power • Honoring the work of the Family Engagement Collaborative • Supporting schools communities to choose what works best for individual sites • Providing families with more opportunities to become district partners for analyzing and solving problems facing our schools (ie: state funding, school closure, etc) • Provide administrative professional development on the role and utility of parent organizations		

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 6: Community Collaboration and Resources

Coordinate resources and services for families, students and the school with businesses, agencies and other groups, and provide services for the community. School partners with community groups to strengthen families and support student success.

Linking families to community services. School organizes support from community partners.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
1. School involves families in locating and using community resources by providing a resource directory for parents and students on community agencies, services, and programs 2. School determines families' needs and preferences for additional programs or services they need to support their children's achievement from data collected from at least 50% of the school's families. 3. The school has some idea of what resources and assets exist in the community. The school partners with community based organizations.	1. School partners with community agencies to provide families with coaching, training, and other resources (ESL courses, computer courses, leadership training, etc.) 2. School determines families' needs and preferences for additional programs or services they need to support their children's achievement from data collected from at least 50% of the school's families. 3. The school knows what resources and assets exist in the community that meets the needs of their families. The school partners with community based organizations.	1. School provides a "one-stop shop" at the school for family services through partnerships of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training and other agencies by providing a dedicated space for a Family Resource Center that operates during extended hours. 2. School determines families' needs and preferences for additional programs or services they need to support their children's achievement from data collected from at least 50% of the school's families. Families play a role in developing delivering programs and services. 3. The school knows what resources and assets exist in the community. The school partners with community based organizations in ways that is directly aligned to the school's goals. 4. School works with local businesses, industries, parks, museums, and other organizations on programs to enhance student skills, learning and offer after school programs for students

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Standard 6: Community Collaboration and Resources

Below are the support systems, resources, programming, and skills that are needed for each category.

1=Emerging	2-Developing	3=Thriving
Programming: •	**Programming:** • Regular meetings with community partners	**Programming:** • Regular meetings with community partners to plan sustainability models.
Resources/Tools: • Parent engagement plan outlining all goals, activities, and outcomes. • Resource need survey	**Resources/Tools:** •	**Resources/Tools:** •
Professional Development: •	**Professional Development:** •	**Professional Development:** •
District Support: • Establishing a central district parent center • Supporting fundraising for site based family resource centers • Teachers and families work with CBO's to develop solutions to local problems. • School determines families' needs and preferences for additional programs or services they need to support their children's achievement from conversations with a few families or general demographic data.		

Source: Oakland Unified School District. (2022).

Endnotes

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41. For a full discussion, including examples of partnership tools, see McLaughlin, M., Fehrer, K., & Leos-Urbel, J. (2020). *The way we do school: The making of Oakland's Full-Service Community School District*. Harvard University Press.

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46. There are six networks of schools in Oakland Unified School District, including an early childhood network, three elementary networks, a middle school network, and a high school network.

47. Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.). *Restorative justice*. https://www.ousd.org/Page/1054 (accessed 01/15/22).

48. Frey, S. (2014, July 22). Agreement reached on 'willful defiance' bill. *EdSource*. https://edsource.org/2014/agreement-reached-on-willful-defiance-bill/65671

49. McLaughlin, M., Fehrer, K., & Leos-Urbel, J. (2020). *The way we do school: The making of Oakland's Full-Service Community School District*. Harvard University Press.

50. Oakland Education Association. (2020). *Community schools and a responsive school board*.

51. The School Plan for Student Achievement is a document submitted annually by schools to the California Department of Education that outlines schools' planned actions and expenditures to support student performance.

52. Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.) *Behavioral health*. https://www.ousd.org/Page/13002 (accessed 10/13/22).

53. As therapists are getting their licenses, they need some intern experience, which they can get through working with Urban Promise Academy. UPA generally has a team of six or seven Wright Institute interns, along with their supervisor, who are providing individual and group therapeutic supports to students.

54. Maker pedagogy is a way of teaching about science and technology in which students work collaboratively by designing, adapting, and creating things.

55. For more information on Zaretta Hammond's curriculum and framework, see https://crtandthebrain.com/.

56. See the Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching, https://crtandthebrain.com/wp-content/uploads/READY-FOR-RIGOR_Final.pdf

57. Oakland High School. (n.d.). https://www.ousd.org/oaklandhigh (accessed 01/21/22).

58. Oakland Unified School District. (2020). *COVID-19 response—fast facts* [Fact sheet]; Oakland Unified School District. (2020). *COVID-19 response food and resource distribution* [Fact sheet].

59. California made a one-time investment of $3 billion in the California Community Schools Partnership Program in the 2021–22 state budget using general fund dollars and then added an additional $1.1 billion in one-time funding in the 2022–23 state budget. See: Fensterwald, J. (2022, May 13). California set to launch hundreds of community schools with $635 million in grants. *EdSource*; California Department of Finance. (2021). *K–12 education* [California state budget 2022–23]; California Department of Finance. (2022). *K–12 education* [California state budget 2022–23]. https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20220307/BILLS-117RCP35-JES-DIVISION-H_Part2.pdf (accessed 08/09/22).

60. California Department of Finance. (2021). *K–12 education* [California state budget 2022–23]; California Department of Finance. (2022). *K–12 education* [California state budget 2022–23]. https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20220307/BILLS-117RCP35-JES-DIVISION-H_Part2.pdf

61. Oakland Unified received approximately $2.5 million in grant funding from the federal Full-Service Community Schools program in fiscal year 2014. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d.). *Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) program awards*. https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/school-choice-improvement-programs/full-service-community-schools-program-fscs/awards/ (accessed 03/28/22). Oakland Unified also received approximately $3 million in grant funding from the first round of the California Community Schools Partnership Program in fiscal year 2021. California Department of Education. (n.d.). *California Community Schools Partnership program funding profile*. https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/profile.asp?id=5577 (accessed 03/28/22).

62. Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Sage Publications. (p. 169).

63. Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications; Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

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