

place matters



community engagement | criminal justice | economics | education | housing | land use + transportation

## Education Policy Workgroup: Background Information

## **Education Vision Statement**

*This vision statement was created using the data from our needs assessment, as well as the information presented by the organizations, agencies, and other groups we have talked to thus far.*

Quality education is a human right. All school-aged youth in Oakland will have access to a quality, comprehensive education in an environment that is safe, healthy, socially supportive, academically stimulating and competitive with other schools, and that prepares them to graduate, achieve their education/career dreams and goals, and be productive members of their communities.

## **Education Problem Statements**

*These problem statements were created using the data from our needs assessment, as well as the information presented by the organizations, agencies, and other groups we have talked to thus far.*

### **1. Graduation Rates/Attrition Rates/Drop-out Rates<sup>1</sup>**

#### ***Problem statement***

The graduation rate for Oakland is too low in comparison to Alameda County and California rates. Within Oakland, there is a large disparity in graduation rates between White and Asian students and other students of color, as well as between wealthy students and low-income students.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***Narrative***

In 2007-2008, 28.1% of Oakland youth dropped out of high school. This is compared to 12.8% of Alameda County youth and 14% California youth. Within Oakland, drop-out rates are much lower for Whites and Asians than other students of color. Additionally, in Oakland, males in all racial/ethnic groups have higher drop-out rates than females. These unequal rates also mean fewer students of color and low-income students graduate from college.<sup>3</sup>

Many factors may impact graduation/drop-out rates, including: teacher and principal recruitment, training, support, and quality; culturally-relevant, quality curricula; school environments; parent and community engagement in decisions made about schools; early childhood education and childcare; physical and mental health issues that impact the ability of youth and families to participate in the educational system; and the ability of individual schools to make decisions about budgets and staffing.

#### ***Examples of health implications of low graduation rates***

Graduation from high school is clearly tied to multiple health outcomes. The impact of education on health happens through many pathways. Even independent from income, education is associated with improved health outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> Depending on which source is being used, the terms graduation rates, attrition rates, and drop-out rates are all used to show the disparity in educational attainment.

<sup>2</sup> Drop out rates are taken from California Department of Education data. 2007-2008 drop-out rates are as follows: American Indian/Alaska Native (22.2%), Asian (13.2%), Pacific Islander (27.4%), Filipino (39.1%), Hispanic or Latino (26.4%), African-American (not Hispanic) (34.8%), White (20.3%), Multiple/No Response (35.4%). While overall, Asians have low drop-out rates, sub-populations within this group may have higher drop-out rates.

<sup>3</sup> Based on the 2000 Census, in Oakland, the percent of people with a Bachelors degree are: American Indian/Alaska Native (16.3%); Asian/Pacific Islander (24.9%); Hispanic (10.4%); African-American (16.4%); and Whites (61.9%).

- **Education is closely correlated with life expectancy.** Studies have shown that each additional year of school is associated with living longer and having better health. Alameda County residents who live in neighborhoods where only 70% of residents have graduated high school live on average 7 fewer years than residents in neighborhoods where at least 90% of residents have graduated.<sup>2</sup> Differences in educational attainment can lead to differences in:

**1) income, job quality, and work conditions**, which is associated with a variety of health outcomes and life expectancy. For more information, see the Place Matters Economics Workgroup problem statements.

**2) psychological and social resources** like skills in problem solving, working in teams, and working within various structures. Differences in these resources can lead to differences in multiple health outcomes.

**3) learned health behaviors**, such as engaging in risk-taking or health-promoting behavior. Differences in learned health behaviors can lead to differences in multiple health outcomes.

**4) the impacts of inequity itself.** The presence of great inequity in society has been shown to lead to poorer health outcomes for all members of that society and especially impacts communities of color and/or low-income communities.

## **2. Problem Statement 2: Achievement Gap**

### ***Problem Statement***

There is a large achievement gap between students in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) as compared to other students within Alameda County and California. Within Oakland, there is a large achievement gap between most youth of color, low-income youth, disabled youth, and English as a Second Language (ESL) students versus White and Asian students and students whose families have a higher income.

### ***Narrative***

OUSD has lower Academic Performance Index (API) scores (651) than all other school districts in the county (many others scored between 800-950). Within OUSD, African-Americans, American-Indian/Alaska Natives, Hispanics/Latinos, Pacific Islanders, ESL students, disabled students, and Filipino students have lower API scores than Whites and Asians. While there is ongoing debate about the utility of test scores and their lack of ability in measuring students' ability and potential, they are one way to compare outcomes within and across districts and they do predict college attendance rates.

The assumed pathway from the achievement gap to poor health outcomes is that lower test scores are an indicator of future high school drop out, which in turn, impacts health through the ways mentioned above.

Many factors may impact graduation/drop-out rates, including: teacher and principal recruitment, training, support, and quality; culturally-relevant, quality curricula; school environments; parent and community engagement in decisions made about schools; early childhood education and childcare; physical and mental health issues that impact the ability of youth and families to participate in the educational system; and the ability of individual schools to make decisions about budgets and staffing.

This problem statement is closely tied to the previous problem statement. However, the achievement gap impacts students who graduate in addition to those who do not graduate.

Among students who graduate from high school, their school system may provide vastly different experiences and preparation for life after high school.

### ***Examples of health implications of the achievement gap***

The pathways from the achievement gap to health outcomes are similar to and connected to the differences in graduation rates. The impact of education on health happens through many pathways. Even independent from income, education is associated with improved health outcomes.

- ***Education is closely correlated with life expectancy.*** Differences in educational attainment can lead to differences in:
    - 1) income, job quality, and work conditions**, which is associated with a variety of health outcomes and life expectancy. For more information, see the Place Matters Economics Workgroup problem statements.
    - 2) psychological and social resources** like skills in problem solving, working in teams, and working within various structures. Differences in these resources can lead to differences in multiple health outcomes.
    - 3) learned health behaviors**, such as engaging in risk-taking or health-promoting behavior. Differences in learned health behaviors can lead to differences in multiple health outcomes.
    - 4) the impacts of inequity itself.** The presence of great inequity in society has been shown to lead to poorer health outcomes for all members of that society and especially impacts communities of color and/or low-income communities.
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### ***Additional Background Information***

*While there are many factors related to high school drop-out and the achievement gap, the Place Matters Education Workgroup wishes to highlight the following two factors because there are closely linked to health outcomes and ongoing work of the health department and/or our close partners.*

***Physical and Mental Health Issues: Too many low-income youth and youth of color in Oakland face an increased burden of physical and mental health issues and these issues are often concentrated in geographic areas. These physical and mental issues impact educational outcomes.***

Studies show health problems often contribute to the decision to leave school. Pregnancy, having sick parents or siblings, chronic illnesses (such as asthma), learning disabilities, and physical disabilities are all examples of health-related reasons for dropping out of school. As children get older, their level of responsibility in the household may increase as well. If a parent is too sick to work and lacks the necessary workplace protections to stay financially stable, then a student may feel compelled to quit school and work to earn money for the family. When parents lack paid time off to care for ill siblings, older children may be required to stay home to provide childcare.

In the area of connecting youth to health and social services, partner agencies and Oakland residents have described situations where youth and their families do not know about services or cannot access services; where the services needed do not exist; or where the services

offered were developed without community participation and do not reflect the needs of residents.

Organizations and residents have called for improved integration of systems, services, and policies between City government, County government, and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). They have asked for: coordinated systems and services that are easy to access; systems that prevent youth and families from falling through the cracks; coordinated Alameda County systems that share goals, information, and resources; and policies, practices, and services that are developed in partnership with communities.

**Early Childhood Education & Childcare: *Too many low-income families and families of color in Oakland lack high-quality childcare and early childhood education.***

The ability to succeed in school and later in life is heavily influenced by factors that impact children even before they start school. The window between when a woman first becomes pregnant and the first few years of life is critical to a child's brain development and health. Stable and supportive family environments and safe and stimulating physical environments are essential. Young children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of stress and poverty, conditions that are often experienced by people of color and families headed by single parents.

Interviews with and reports from local organizations highlight many issues that impact young children, especially in childcare, child development centers, and kindergarten transition programs. There are a range of issues that can impact early childhood development, including: a lack of standards for childcare providers; little support for training childcare providers; physical and building issues (e.g. mold); and not reaching all children because of a lack of staffing, lack of communication, and/or eligibility rules.

## **List of “Experts” and Relevant Reports**

*In addition to reviewing the local data on the economic conditions in Oakland and the research on the pathways by which health and economic conditions are linked, we spoke with “experts” in the field. We defined “experts” as people who have experience in the area of education, through personal experience, academic research, job focus or any other way that gave them exposure to education issues. We also reviewed local reports and policy agendas that included policy recommendations related to education. This list covers both.*

### **“Experts” we spoke with:**

- Ed Trust West – *Linda Murray, Acting Executive Director, Sheilagh Polk, Outreach Manager*
- Justice Matters – *Malaika Parker, Director of Community Action*
- GO Public Schools, The Rogers Foundation – *Jonathan Klein*
- Every Child Counts/First 5 Alameda County – *Nancy Lee, Early Care and Education Director, Erin Freschi, School Readiness Program Administrator*
- Alameda County School Health Services Coalition, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency – *Tracey Shear, School Health Services Director, James Nguyen, School-Based Health Center Manager, and Kimi Sakashita, Oakland School Health Coordinator*
- Montera Middle School focus group
- Oakland Tech High School focus group
- Bay Area Coalition for Health Equity
- Community Development Associates, former OUSD School Board member – *Greg Hodge*
- Alameda County Public Health Department, Nutrition Services – *Darlene Fujii*

### **Local reports we referenced:**

- *Report and Recommendations to the East Oakland Building Healthy Communities Initiative.* Oakland Community Organizations (OCO) [www.oaklandcommunity.org](http://www.oaklandcommunity.org)
- *Life and Death from Unnatural Causes: Health and Social Inequity in Alameda County.* Alameda County Public Health Department. [www.acphd.org/healthequity](http://www.acphd.org/healthequity)
- *Oakland Moving Forward Community Task Force Report on Education & Community Learning.* Dellums Taskforce Report.

### **Agendas we referenced:**

- Black Men and Boys Policy Agenda. [www.fwced.com](http://www.fwced.com) This group is in Fresno but has a policy agenda that focus on similar education and health inequities.

### **People or resources we plan on contacting or reviewing:**

- Oakland Youth Movement
- East Oakland Building Health Community Initiative
- Ingrid Roberson, Director, Oakland Unified School District, Research & Assessment Department
- Jean Wing, Researcher, Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), Research & Assessment Department
- Other OUSD staff
- Oakland Education Association
- Parents and parent groups
- Alameda County Office of Education
- Please let us know if you have ideas about others we should contact

