

# YEAR IN REVIEW

OAKLAND STARTING  
SMART & STRONG

[www.oaklandsmartandstrong.org](http://www.oaklandsmartandstrong.org)

20  
22



*"We Are The Ones We've Been Waiting For," mural by Jessica Sabogal, 20th St and Telegraph in Oakland.*



**Oakland Starting  
Smart & Strong**



# Oakland Starting Smart & Strong



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THIS REPORT SHARES SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF OAKLAND STARTING SMART AND STRONG'S ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT 2022.

# A Message from Our Co-Chairs and Director

On behalf of Oakland Starting Smart and Strong (OSSS), we are happy and proud to share highlights of our collaborative work in 2022. OSSS began in 2014 as part of a ten-year funded initiative of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and has evolved into a broad and diverse early learning network that supports young children, their families, caregivers, and educators in Oakland.

This year, in addition to our ongoing activities, we developed a **strategic plan** based on a process involving over 300 Oakland early learning stakeholders.

The OSSS community reaffirmed the work of our collaborative and laid the foundation for continuing the work after the Packard investment ends. We refined our mission statement: *OSSS is a citywide collaborative that advances racial justice, develops and amplifies community-driven solutions, and advocates for changes in policy and resources to create an early childhood ecosystem that effectively serves children 0-5, their families, caregivers, and educators.*

With our **collective vision of success that all children, families, and early educators flourish in Oakland**, we developed new priority areas which are included in this Year in Review. As we begin 2023 with a sense of purpose and possibility, we extend our appreciation and gratitude to all of our partners and community members.

In Community,

**Priya Jagannathan**, OSSS Director

**Christie Herrera**, Oakland Unified School District, OSSS Co-Chair

**Kym Johnson**, BANANAS, Inc., OSSS Co-Chair



# OSSS Priority Area: Racial Justice

OSSS strives to create an effective and just early childhood ecosystem in Oakland that addresses systemic racism and is equitable for all children and families.



## BOYS OF COLOR WORKGROUP

The OSSS Boys of Color Workgroup worked with educators and researchers to develop and distribute **10 Promising Practices in Early Learning for Black Boys: Action Toolkit**, a practical guide with actions and strategies to improve educational outcomes for Black boys.

A Community of Practice to support the implementation of the Action Toolkit is currently underway, with Early Head Start, Head Start, Preschool, and Transitional Kindergarten teachers collaborating to implement strategies and share their work to contribute to further development of the toolkit.

## COMMUNITY LEADER: CORRINE WILLIAMS-LINDSEY

"My participation in the Community of Practice was driven by my commitment to pour back into the community where I have been raised and attempt to mimic the experiences that I had as a young Black child growing up being educated by people who look like me.

While Black boys are young, I want to be able to model relationship-based, positive, and authentic interactions that create environments that feel safe and nurturing for children and their families. These relationships can be cultivated by anyone, regardless of color, age, or gender as long as there is genuine investment in understanding each child as an individual. I believe that learning should be driven by investors that are invested."

— Corrine Williams-Lindsey entered the early care field as an undergraduate at Cal State University Sacramento in 2000, and has been an early childhood educator for over 20 years. She currently works as a Center Director at the City of Oakland Early Head Start Program at San Antonio Park.



# OSSS Priority Area: Racial Justice

## RESILIENT OAKLAND COMMUNITIES & KIDS (ROCK)

### SURVEY RESULTS

Educators who attended Professional Learning Communities held more positive beliefs about their students, jobs, and themselves when compared to those who did not attend one.

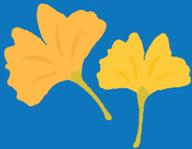
**87% vs 65%**

Felt able to do their best each day to help their students.



**81% vs 52%**

Agreed that focusing on developing healthy, healing relationships is the best approach when working with people with trauma histories.



**75% vs 41%**

Believed that students are doing the best they can with the skills they have.



## RESILIENT OAKLAND COMMUNITIES AND KIDS (ROCK)

OSSS implements **Resilient Oakland Communities and Kids (ROCK)** activities to support trauma-responsive care. These activities include trainings, professional learning communities (PLCs), coaching, and yoga/self-care. Over time, this work has evolved to incorporate and build on an anti-racist equity framework.

In 2022, 35 Oakland Unified School District preschool teachers, administrators, and specialists participated in 170 trauma-responsive PLC and coaching sessions. This year, we also began developing a resource for early childhood educators to launch ROCK programming at their sites.

A survey of OUSD early learning educators showed significant differences between those who participated in PLCs and those who did not. Some survey results are shared in the infographic to the left. Overall, these educators felt more positive about their students, themselves, and their jobs.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023:

- Reporting on the impact of trauma-informed learning communities.
- Creating guides for implementing trauma-responsive supports and supports for Black boys in early learning.

# OSSS Priority Area: Community and Family Leadership

OSSS believes that real change can only occur with meaningful participation of communities and families - parents, caregivers and educators are the driving force behind our work.

## OAKLAND FAMILY CHILD CARE (FCC) POLICY PROGRAM

The **FCC Policy Program** is a group of FCC providers and parents interested in learning about early childhood policy, advocating for FCC providers and their businesses, and strengthening the whole field through connecting with elected officials and early childhood systems partners.

This year, the group met with and uplifted their advocacy priorities to 15 elected officials/candidates who represent Oakland, including Oakland City Council, OUSD School Board members, and Assembly member Mia Bonta's office. The group also organized and led an **OUSD School Board Candidates forum** attended by all but one of the school board candidates. OSSS supports the FCC Policy Program, in partnership with BANANAS and First 5 Alameda County.



### COMMUNITY LEADER: CAROLYN CARPENTER

“This was a critical election year in Oakland. Three of the seats for the school board were up for election. This potentially could shift the policies of the Board. We wanted both the opportunity to learn what policies the candidates supported AND a chance to educate them on how OUSD's actions impact the larger ECE community (specifically FCC providers) and the families we care for.” – Carolyn Carpenter is the owner-director of Bloomers Preschool in Oakland and a member of the Oakland FCC Policy Program. She has been an early childhood educator since 1989. Carolyn is also a member of the SEIU Child Care Providers Union 521, and an advocate for children, families, and early childhood providers.

## FAMILY NAVIGATORS PROJECT

Family Navigators support families in finding resources to meet their basic needs, moving through public and non-profit service systems. OSSS undertook a research project to **identify the needs of family navigators** and develop recommendations to address those needs and challenges.

Interviews were conducted with over 20 family navigators and representatives from 9 agencies in Oakland. The ideas and perspectives of Family Navigators were uplifted in a **report** that includes recommendations on how to improve systems.



# OSSS Priority Area: Community and Family Leadership

## OAKLAND EARLY LEARNING SYMPOSIUM



*Symposium participants at the Saturday Symposium Social: Books, Bags, & Breakfast, an event hosted by OSSS at BANANAS for participants to pick up free children's books, lunch bags, and totes while connecting with peers.*

OSSS hosted two **Oakland Early Learning Symposium** events in 2022: 1) Fostering Social-Emotional Skills Through Books and 2) Partnering with Families of Children with Special Needs

- 334 attendees with 96.5% satisfaction rate
- Over 150 attendees picked up bags of books (in Arabic, Chinese, English, Spanish and wordless)

Let's Talk Early Learning drop-in sessions, facilitated by four OUSD preschool teachers in English and Spanish, offer symposium participants confidential space for peer sharing.

## CHILD TAX CREDIT (CTC)

OSSS promoted the Child Tax Credit to Alameda County families. Activities included:

- Funding 4Cs of Alameda County to conduct CTC outreach.
- Distributed CTC postcards and posters through partnerships:
  - United Way of Bay Area: over 15,000 households in zip codes with lowest CTC uptake in the county
  - First 5 Alameda County: 1,800 Help Me Grow families
  - Children and youth-serving organizations: sent posters and postcards to 40 organizations



### HAVE KIDS?

Receive thousands of dollars when you file your taxes

Almost all families qualify, even if you don't normally file taxes.



[uwba.org/taxhelp](http://uwba.org/taxhelp)

*At one event alone in November, 4Cs helped families claim \$30,000 in CTC credits.*

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023:

- Supporting family child care providers in their advocacy efforts and in developing a strong partnership with Oakland Unified School District.
- Continuing symposium efforts to support early learning professionals.
- Advancing the recommendations in the family navigator report.

# OSSS Priority Area: Data, Policy, and Advocacy

OSSS is committed to using asset-based data, community knowledge and perspective to inform early childhood policy and resource decision-making in Oakland.

## CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL BOARD ENGAGEMENT

One 2022 goal was for OSSS to educate and engage with City of Oakland elected-officials. This goal was met through the following activities:

- Developed the **Early Childhood Matters guide** for elected officials and candidates to better understand early childhood policy priorities in Oakland.
- Organized meetings with all eight Oakland City Council members and their staff, uplifting FCC economic asks for the City's Midcycle Budget.
- Supported the FCC OUSD School Board candidates forum and distributed an **early childhood education questionnaire** to every candidate running for office in Oakland.
- Began meeting with OUSD School Board Directors, highlighting the importance of supporting the early childhood mixed delivery system.



## DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING RESEARCH PROJECT



The **Developmental Screening Research Project report** was issued in 2022, identifying emerging developmental screening practice improvements and policy issues. OSSS convened partners to develop the following implementation, policy, and research recommendations:

- A greater focus is needed on specific neighborhoods and demographic groups that have had lower rates of screening
- Screening results should be integrated with kindergarten transition activities
- Increase efforts to share results and follow-up with parents and caregivers

# OSSS Priority Area: Data, Policy, and Advocacy



## EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (EDI)

The EDI, a community snapshot of kindergarten children's health, development, and school readiness, was implemented in OUSD with OSSS support in 2017 and 2020. OSSS has shared [the results of the EDI](#) with a wide range of partners.

In the Fall of 2022, OSSS and OUSD administered the parent companion survey to the EDI, the Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ). Close to 1,000 families completed this survey about their child(ren). This information was shared with Kindergarten teachers to assist them in providing more comprehensive support to their students.

*In early 2022, Parent Voices Oakland (PVO), in partnership with OSSS, was showcased in a **national case study** for its groundbreaking family-led data collection and advocacy.*

## COMMUNITY LEADER: HAILEY JORDAN, MPH

"I've appreciated that conversations at the OSSS Data Committee and my work with OUSD Early Learning is centered on supporting the Whole Child. Each of us is committed to advancing the social, emotional, and physical development of children so they can thrive in and outside the classroom." — Hailey Jordan joined OUSD in 2022 as an Early Childhood Research Associate and co-chairs the OSSS Data Committee along with Tanisha Payton from Parent Voices Oakland.



## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023:

- Partnering with UCLA to engage in the third implementation of the EDI.
- Organizing a Developmental Screening Workgroup to implement the recommendations identified in the Research Report.
- Creating City of Oakland Council District data profiles to help highlight the importance of early childhood for policymakers.

# OSSS Priority Area: Systems Change

*OSSS will continue to serve as a backbone support for our collective efforts in Oakland to strengthen the systems that touch the lives of children and families.*



## OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

**The collaborative continued to support systems change in 2022, including:**

- Convening active workgroups (Boys of Color, Data, Early Learning Symposium, Policy & Advocacy, FCC Policy) led by community members, families/caregivers and educators
- Supporting scaling of best practices within OUSD - including kindergarten transitions and developmental screening
- As the Oakland Children's Initiative (Measure AA) begins implementation, OSSS will continue to be a source of information and education for policymakers and ECE partners
- OSSS embarked on a business plan process that details how the collaborative will be organized, staffed, and funded in the coming years



# Our Priority Area: Systems Change

## STAFF

OSSS is led by a small and mighty team who serve as the backbone for our collective efforts.

## LEAD PLANNING TEAM

This OSSS leadership table represents a wide range of organizations and community leaders, setting the direction for our work.

## TASK FORCE

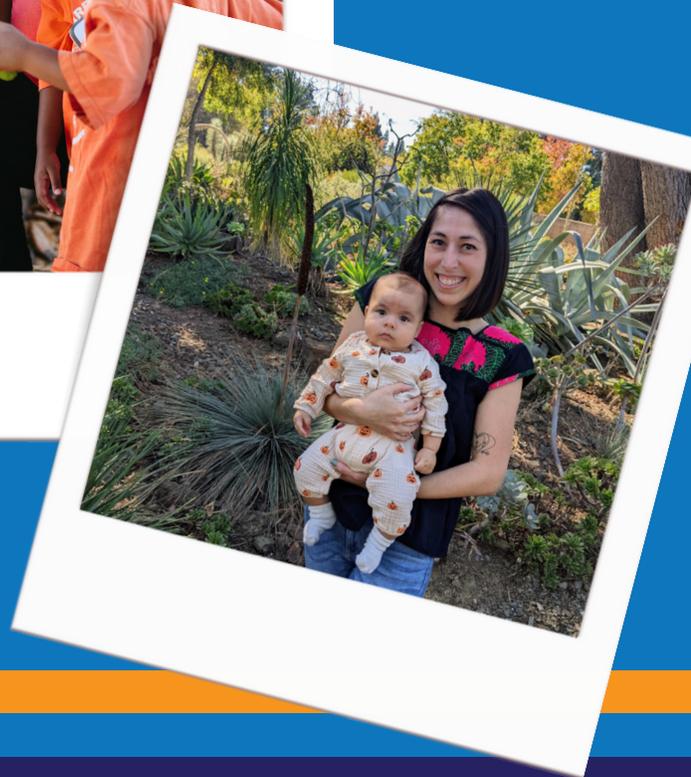
With over 100 members, the OSSS Task Force is a learning community that shares information and discusses critical issues related to young children.

## FUNDERS

OSSS has a strong partnership with philanthropy, receiving funding from David and Lucile Packard, Hellman, Rainin, and H&H Foundations.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023:

- Continuing to support the growth and expansion of the Kindergarten transition partnership with OUSD and ECE partners.
- Partnering to develop policies and practices that mitigate the impact of universal Transitional Kindergarten on the ECE mixed delivery system.
- Implementing components of the OSSS strategic plan and continue to plan for the future by refining the OSSS business plan.



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