EDI, Anti-Racism, and Systems Change: Oakland's Recommendations for the EDI Methods and Implementation
August 2021

Oakland Starting Smart and Strong has been working in partnership with UCLA's Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities and our community stakeholders, including parent advocacy groups, to discuss how to make EDI efforts more equitable and antiracist. OSSS has been transparent with the community, and has received feedback on the tool itself, in addition to the results and how they are framed. This memo summarizes Oakland's recommendations on how to make the EDI a more equitable and relevant tool for community change. We hope these changes can be put in place for the next implementation of the EDI in Oakland, scheduled for 2023. As we make the necessary changes to move toward antiracism and equity, we understand that we'll also need to ensure we maintain the validity and reliability of the EDI tool. We look forward to this challenge and the collaborative work that lies ahead.

This is a summary of our key recommendations:

[EDI Methods and Asset-Based Framing](#)
- EDI language should focus on systems instead of labeling individual children as "On Track" or "Vulnerable"
- Analysis of the EDI data should focus on systems, rather than individual characteristics.
- Some EDI questions and subdomains are not culturally competent and lead to implicit bias.

[EDI and Multilingual Learners](#)
- The EDI does not fully reflect language development for students learning English as a second language.

[EDI and Relevance for Community-Led Systems Change](#)
- The EDI should:
  - Include actionable steps for how to turn data ownership over to communities.
  - Be accessible, helpful, and relevant to families and the community.
  - Make results readily available to support community advocacy efforts, if and when they want it.
  - Should be paired with qualitative and quantitative data from the community to tell a fuller story.
- UCLA should help EDI communities collaborate with local stakeholders to co-create ways to use the EDI

EDI METHODS AND ASSET-BASED FRAMING

EDI language should focus on systems instead of labeling individual children as "On Track" or "Vulnerable"

We believe the EDI has the potential to be used by community members to advocate for changes to systems to better serve children. However, we are concerned that the way EDI results are reported places too much focus on individual child readiness and too little focus on systemic issues. Specifically, the "On track" and "Vulnerable" language places full responsibility for child development on marginalized families and children themselves rather than focusing on the systemic drivers such as systemic racism and structural funding issues. We propose changing these terms to better reflect whether our early childhood systems are adequately serving children. *We propose changing "On track" to "Fully supported by early childhood systems" and "vulnerable" to "early childhood system failure."* This change in language would make the EDI more focused on the need for system change efforts that address structural racism and the need for increased funding and access to services that will ensure all children thrive. We adopted this change in language in our ECEcosystem Zone Profile (see appendix 1) and community members appreciated the asset-based framing.

Current EDI Language	Proposed Reframed Language
On track	"Fully supported by early childhood systems"
Vulnerable	"Early childhood systems failure" OR "Not fully supported by early childhood systems"

Note that this issue was brought up at the National EDI Learning Partner Exchange in February 2021 where it was shared that EDI analyses are not individual child analyses, but rather a reflection of the ecosystem. EDI partners suggested adopting language that puts the critique on the system, not on the people who are the survivors of unjust systems. They specifically recommended using "the ecosystem is not meeting the developmental needs of this [insert population] in this [insert domain]" instead of "children are not performing well on [insert domain]." Finally, they noted that this framing is important as we do not want to white wash the injustices of systems. This would also be in line with Dr Renée Boynton-Jarrett's presentation at the April 2021 National EDI Learning Partner Exchange, where she recommended using asset framing as opposed to problem framing.

Analysis of the EDI data should focus on systems, rather than individual characteristics.

We also have found that some analyses of the EDI data focus too much on individual characteristics rather than systematic inequities. This emphasis on individual characteristics, rather than systems, is evidenced in the 2020 Oakland Enhanced Analytics Report's Neighborhood Risk Index (NRI). The NRI consists of ten census indicators that illustrate

"community context." The four "positive indicators" for a neighborhood include the percentage of a population with a college degree, a waged income, owner occupied housing, and households with interest, rent, or dividend income. The six "negative indicators" include the percentage of single parent households, limited English speaking households, "disconnected" teenage youth, population without a high school diploma, families living in poverty, and households with public assistance income.

The criteria for the NRI detracts from a focus on systemic barriers. Rather than addressing the racist policies that concentrate wealth and opportunity in white communities -- such as redlining, urban renewal, predatory lending, mass incarceration, and other policies that disproportionately exclude Black people from housing and labor markets -- the NRI lacks this critical context and instead highlights individual characteristics. By coding white, middle/upper middle class norms of homeownership and higher education as "positive" and being a renter, single-parent, and/or immigrant with limited access to education and economic opportunity as "negative," the underlying assumptions of the NRI presume that racial-/economic-/gender-privileged norms are universally desirable and that anyone who deviates from those norms is "negative" or "at risk." It is no surprise that the EDI verifies that Oakland's most "at risk" communities are located in [historically redlined neighborhoods in the Oakland flatlands](). But without explicitly naming these root causes of disparity, tools like the NRI normalize racial pathology.

Oakland communities of color have a long history of being stigmatized and dehumanized by this sort of data analysis. While we appreciate the work that goes into producing the Enhanced Analytics and other reports, these reports are a disservice to Oakland families and community partners, who would likely dismiss the EDI as a tool to advance equity, if we shared this sort of analysis broadly.

For the NRI, we recommend:
- Being explicit about the limitations, historical context, and empiricist methodological assumptions of the NRI, so the analysis is not received at face value
- Invest staff time and resources into redesigning the NRI tool and criteria to focus on root cause analysis, and reframe the overall purpose of the tool
- Instead of producing the NRI, provide TA supports and analytical tools that are culturally relevant and anti-racist

Some EDI questions and subdomains are not culturally competent and lead to implicit bias.

When sharing EDI data with Oakland community members, we have consistently received feedback about the names of the subdomains in the Emotional Maturity and Social Competence domains. Community members have expressed concern that the phrasing of the subdomain names is not culturally competent and does not reflect an anti-racist, asset-based view of child development and behavior. Many community members have expressed similar concerns about

the specific questions on the EDI questionnaire for these domains. We agree and are concerned that the phrasing of many of the questions could result in responses from teachers that are influenced by their own implicit biases about children of color and boys.

We propose that, in the short term, UCLA changes the name of the subdomains in the Emotional Maturity and Social Competence domains to names that more appropriately reflect an anti-racist and asset-based understanding of child development. This would also be in line with Dr Renée Boynton-Jarrett's presentation at the April 2021 National EDI Learning Partner Exchange, where she recommended using asset framing as opposed to problem framing. In the long term, we propose that UCLA studies the EDI instrument and instructions given to teachers, to ensure that the questions are culturally competent and minimize the possibility of implicit bias from teachers completing the questionnaire.

Below we present alternative subdomain names for six of the eight subdomains in the Emotional Maturity and Social Competence domains. We took the alternative subdomain names from the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP-K 2015) measures in the Approaches to Learning - Self Regulation and Social and Emotional Development domains.[1] We also propose that UCLA changes the domain names so that Emotional Maturity becomes "Approaches to Learning – Self-Regulation" and Social Competence becomes "Social and Emotional Development."

Current EDI Subdomain Name	Potential Reframed Subdomain Name (from DRDP K)
Aggressive Behavior ● Children who rarely or never show most of the aggressive behaviors; they do not use aggression as means of solving conflict, do not have temper tantrums, and are not mean to others.	Relationships and Social Interactions with Peers (SED) ● Child becomes increasingly competent and cooperative in interactions with peers and develops friendships with several peers
Anxious and fearful behavior ● Children who rarely or never show most of the anxious behaviors, they are happy and able to enjoy school, and are comfortable being left at school by caregivers.	Self-Control of Feelings and Behavior (ATL-REG) ● Child increasingly develops strategies for regulating feelings and behavior, becoming less reliant on adult guidance over time
Hyperactive and inattentive behavior ● Children who never show most of the hyperactive behaviors; they are able to concentrate, settle to chosen	Engagement and Persistence (ATL-REG) ● Child increasingly persists in understanding or mastering activities, even if they are challenging or difficult

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[1] DRDP-K (2015). California Department of Education. https://drdpk.org/docs/DRDP2015K_Final_12032015.pdf

activities, wait their turn, and most of the time think before doing something.	
Prosocial and helping behavior ● Children who often show most of the helping behaviors: helping someone hurt, sick or upset, offering to help spontaneously, and inviting bystanders to join in.	Social and Emotional Understanding (SED) ● Child shows developing understanding of people's behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and individual characteristics
Readiness to explore new things ● Children who are curious about the surrounding world, and are eager to explore new books, toys and games.	Curiosity and Initiative in Learning (ATL-REG) ● Child explores the environment in increasingly focused ways to learn about people, things, materials, and events
Respect and responsibility ● Children who always or most of the time show respect for others and for property, follow rules and take care of materials, accept responsibility for actions, and show self-control.	Relationships and Social Interactions with Familiar Adults (SED) ● Child develops close relationships with one or more familiar adults (including family members) and interacts in an increasingly competent and cooperative manner with familiar adults

EDI AND MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

The EDI does not fully reflect language development for students learning English as a second language.

Another concern that community stakeholders consistently raise is whether the EDI is adequately measuring the language development of students learning English as a second language. This concern stems from the fact that the questions in the Language and Cognition domain either explicitly ask about English language skills or do not specify whether the teacher should consider students' native language skills. Because teachers are not explicitly given tools to assess the Dual Language Learners' (DLL) literacy skills in their home language, the EDI misses key information about these students' language abilities. Linda Espinosa and Michael L. López (2007) explain the importance of considering bilingual children's early language experiences when assessing their literacy development: "Bilingualism may result in a slower rate of vocabulary development than children learning a single language. As children are acquiring two languages and becoming bilingual, one language may dominate (Espinosa, in press;

Genesee 2004). That is normal. It does not mean that the child is necessarily language delayed or disordered.[2]"

We are concerned that the EDI does not fully reflect the language development of DLL students because it:
1. Overlooks student home language abilities and presents a deficit-based view of their language skills
2. Misrepresents how well early childhood systems are supporting DLLs to acquire two languages
3. Inaccurately suggests that DLLs are automatically less likely to succeed later in school.

We appreciate that UCLA is convening an ELL Advisory Group to explore ways to improve how the EDI measures DLLs' language achievements. *We recommend that the advisory group consider the following short and long term changes to the EDI and support to EDI communities:*

- Provide recommendations to EDI communities on how to supplement the EDI with additional student-level literacy assessments that provide valid and reliable information into DLLs' home language abilities. See Espinosa and López (2007) for considerations on assessing young DLLs.
- Provide clearer guidance to teachers filling out the EDI on how to answer Language and Cognition questions for DLLs. In particular, the guidance should clarify whether teachers can use their own understanding of each DLL's home language skills or whether they should only base their answers on the language of instruction.
- Provide EDI communities with guidance on communicating with members of their communities about Language and Cognition EDI results for DLLs. This guidance should include: 1) increased transparency about how accurately the EDI measures literacy development for DLLs, 2) information on the assets and protective factors that bilingual students possess, and 3) ideas for how communities can better support the literacy development (including English and their home language) of DLLs.
- Research changes to the EDI instrument to more comprehensively and accurately measure the language abilities of DLLs.

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[2] Espinosa, L. M., & López, M. L. (2007). Assessment considerations for young English language learners across different levels of accountability. National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force and First, 5. . Retrieved on 6/15/21 from: https://www.first5la.org/files/AssessmentConsiderationsEnglishLearners.pdf

EDI AND RELEVANCE FOR COMMUNITY-LED SYSTEMS CHANGE

The EDI should include actionable steps for how to turn data ownership over to communities.

Community stakeholders and local early childhood experts have shared that presenting the EDI data and providing a public dashboard is not enough to ensure that the community has full ownership of the data and can use it to create and advocate for solutions. There is a strong desire in Oakland to put both research and systems change into the hands of those most impacted, the community. Community stakeholders have noted a pattern of not being included at both the research and policymaking table. There are specific concerns that the EDI was brought in without consultation of the community, and that the community should have been involved every step of the way. Our community partners have expressed a need to build trust between the community and those who share, develop, and/or analyze EDI data. While the EDI can help "enact policies that are more just and equitable, serving the actual needs of our youngest neighbors," we know that this cannot be done equitably and effectively without community input, trust, and leadership.[3]

These sentiments were also echoed at the National EDI Learning Partner Exchanges in February and April 2021. One EDI partner noted that the community has the right to dispel or affirm the data and that we should be asking the community if they are seeing what the data is showing. This partner also noted that the best presenter of the EDI data to the community is the community itself. It was also recommended by EDI partners that the community should be the ones to lead any evaluation. *We recommend that UCLA helps EDI communities across the country develop a plan for meaningfully engaging with a diverse group of stakeholders in their community and ultimately turning data ownership over to community members.*

EDI data should be accessible, helpful, and relevant to families and the community.

Community stakeholders made a number of recommendations on how to increase the usage of EDI data. They requested training and workshops to increase the community's data literacy so they are able to interpret the data and make informed decisions about the data and potential next steps. They noted that the data needs to be shared in a way that is easier to understand, more accessible, and more comfortable for families. One recommendation was to create printable zone or neighborhood data profiles. This was also brought up at the National EDI Learning Partner Exchange in February 2021; one EDI partner noted that EDI data visualizations need to be accessible to the community and tailored to the specific audience. We attempted to make the EDI data more accessible to parents by partnering with a parent action leadership group to co-create a ECEcosystem Zone Profile for their neighborhood that presented ECE data (including the EDI and other data points) alongside quotes from parents as well as the group's

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[3] Language from the EDI Elevator Pitch from Lightbox Collaborative. Emailed Monday, June 14, 2021 by Leila Espinosa, Knowledge to Action Director, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities.

main policy advocacy goal - a new community resource center in their neighborhood (see appendix 1).

Community stakeholders noted that they'd like to see more intentional outreach to families, community stakeholders, and early educators. They recommended being more clear about what the EDI measures and what the data means. One recommendation is to include Frequently Asked Questions in presentations and on the public online dashboard. A specific recommendation on how to increase the usage while also building trust with the EDI is to partner with long standing community-based organizations and have these organizations share the data with the community. They also encouraged EDI researchers and administrators to ensure they are creating space for the community to be disappointed about the data as well as opportunities to heal. This was also noted at the April 2021 National EDI Learning Partner Exchange, when it was recommended that we create space for people to be reflective and that we must allow people to share ideas and disagree. Finally, one community stakeholder recommended researching how families are responding to the data and to the framing of the data to inform future presentations and dashboards.

EDI results should be readily available to support community advocacy efforts, if and when they want it.

Community stakeholders also recommended that EDI data be made more actionable at a grassroots level. Some community stakeholders expressed great hope for the EDI and felt that the EDI could be a powerful tool to create change that would improve the lives of children and families.They recommended using the data to support existing local advocacy efforts. They suggested creating tailored advocacy tools based on community's feedback and needs. This could also include connecting EDI results with talking points and advocacy opportunities that have been identified by community members and organizations. The ECEcosystem Zone Profile in appendix 1 shows how EDI data can be paired with community advocacy goals to bolster ongoing advocacy and organizing efforts.

EDI Data should be paired with qualitative and quantitative data from the community to tell a fuller story.

Community stakeholders echoed the national EDI statement and have called for a specific process for how to "integrate [the EDI] with contextual data to illuminate root causes, and hone in on racial and other demographic disparities."[4] To "learn what is working and co-create specific solutions to address barriers," community stakeholders have noted that "the right data" and the most "reliable data" cannot *only* include the EDI-- it must also include community voice and leadership.[5] They have recommended pairing the EDI with qualitative and quantitative data from

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[4] *Id.*

[5] Language from the EDI National Statement from Lightbox Collaborative. Emailed Monday, June 14, 2021 by Leila Espinosa, Knowledge to Action Director, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities.

the community to include lived experiences and tell a fuller, richer story about the community, as well as how the early childhood ecosystem is supporting or not supporting young children and their families. Only then are we able to "collectively make informed decisions about systems, programs, and policies at the neighborhood, city, state, and national levels."[6] The ECEcosystem Zone Profile in appendix 1 shows one way in which EDI data can be paired with qualitative data to tell a more complete story about a neighborhood.

Note that these recommendations were brought up at the April 2021 National EDI Learning Partner Exchange where Dr. Renée Boynton-Jarrett presented on anti-racist research. At this meeting, folks shared about the importance of listening to the community first and hearing what they want. There was a push for putting stories first and Dr. Boynton-Jarrett encouraged EDI partners to think about including strengths of the community for a more comprehensive narrative. Narratives provide a more holistic look and can help us create more equitable partnerships. She also noted that it adds complexity to the narrative, which is very much needed.

UCLA should help EDI communities collaborate with local stakeholders to co-create ways to use the EDI

Community stakeholders are interested in working collaboratively to co-create specific supports to address barriers and have offered OSSS a number of recommendations for how to use the EDI data, some of which could potentially be operationalized in Oakland and across the country in other EDI communities. Through a series of community stakeholder[7] interviews over a 3-month period, the following uses were identified:

- Advocate for targeted local funding
- Support current community-based organizations' services and programs
- Support current community organizing efforts
- Advocate for increased resources and supports for both public educators and early educators
- Tell stories that lift up and celebrate communities
- Share neighborhood-level data with navigators at resource and referral agencies and family resource centers
- Share the data with influential community leaders
- Create funder packets
- Investigate positive changes in data to understand what is working and why – then expand, duplicate, and/or invest

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[6] *Id.*

[7] "Stakeholders" includes partners/colleagues from a local family resource center, a graduate school for social work, ECE and child development programs, a local child care resource and referral agency, a neighborhood parent organizing group, OUSD's Early Childhood Education Department, a local family child care home, a local parent-led grassroots organization, and a local child development public organization.

- Assess whether OUSD schools are prepared to meet the needs of incoming kindergarteners
- Support community leaders in developing policy memos that are actionable at the grassroots level

We recommend that UCLA help EDI communities across the country collaborate with local stakeholders to co-create ways to use the EDI.

Zone 5
Early Childhood Ecosystem Profile
(San Antonio, Fruitvale)

"**What I like about my neighborhood is diversity**. I live around all different cultures. This has been the most multicultural neighborhood I've ever lived in. [...] There's Latino, there's Asian and all other kinds of culture that I never heard of. I like being around that and I want that for my children." -Yolanda Monroe, Parent of 2

The Neighborhood

14 languages

14 Different languages are spoken by families at home

12 countries

Families immigrated from 12 different countries

70% DLLs

70% of 2020-21 OUSD kindergarteners are Dual Language Learners

Asian 19.6%

White 2.6%

Black 11.2%

Other 6.7%

Hispanic 59.9%
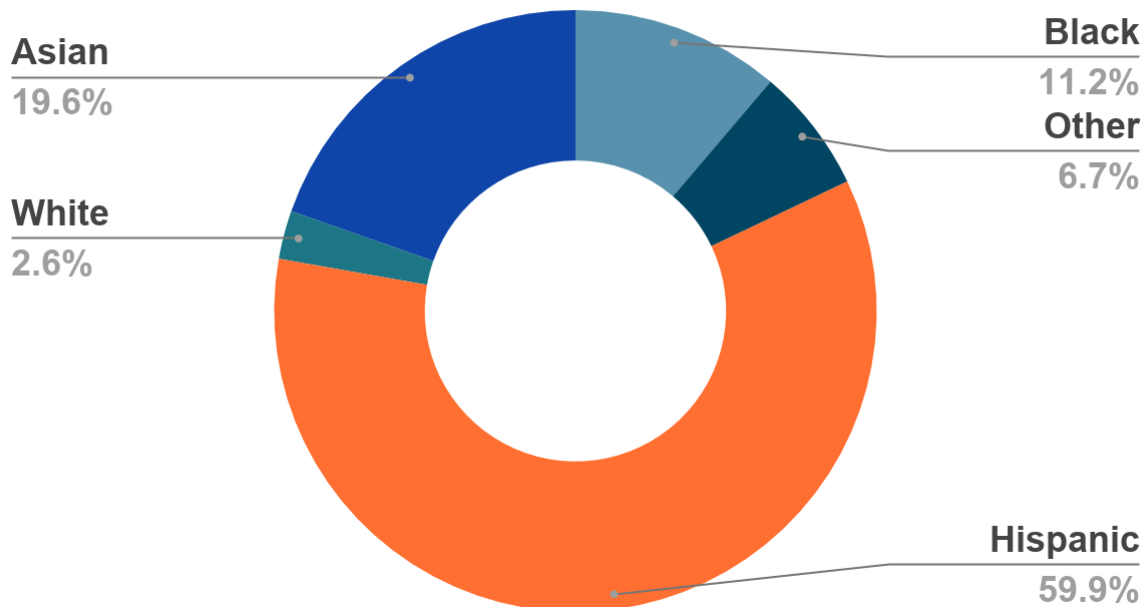
Support For Zone 5's Young Children

Social Competence

% Fully Supported in Social Competence (2020)
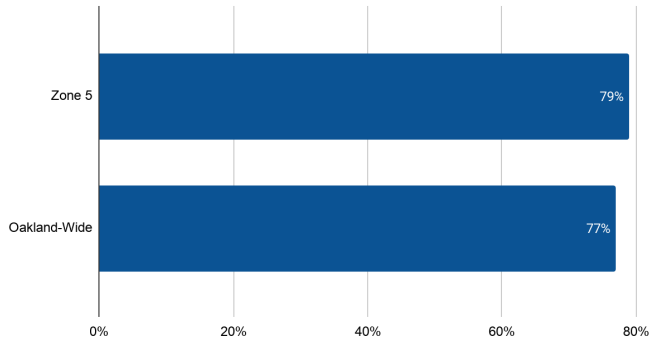
In 2020, 79% of Zone 5 OUSD kindergarteners were fully supported by the ECEcosystem in the area of social competence.

"The people here, they live together, they work with each other, and they uplift each other." -Rajni Chauhan, Parent of 2

Opportunity for Change: The San Antonio Parent Action Group submitted a proposal to the City of Oakland for a full service Community Resource Center in San Antonio Park that would act as a hub for park activities that promote wellness, connection, culture and healing for people of all ages.

Physical Health and Well-Being

% Fully Supported in Physical Health and Well-Being
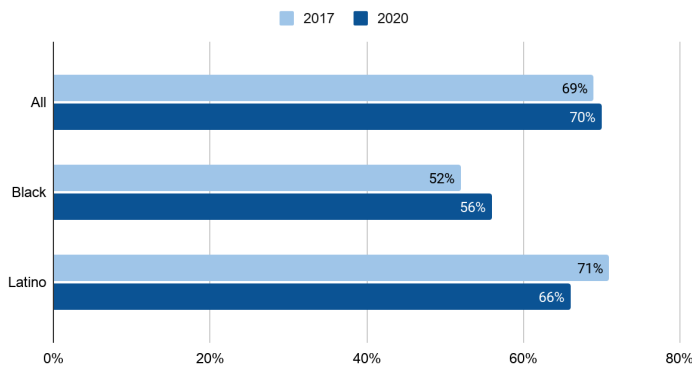
From 2017 to 2020, Zone 5 had a 1% increase overall for Physical Health and Well-Being of OUSD kindergarteners. However, the ECEcosystem is fully supporting only 56% of Black students and 66% of Latino students.

"I would like to see more rec centers in these neighborhoods. When I was raised we had a school and two blocks down there was a rec center. [...] Especially this neighborhood because it's a large neighborhood with a lot of children." -Yolanda Monroe, Parent of 2

Opportunity For Change: The new San Antonio Community Resource Center would include food distribution and family navigation support, including help applying for public services such as MediCal and rental assistance.

Language and Cognition

Only 48% of all OUSD kindergartners in Zone 5 were fully supported by the ECEcosystem, compared to 65% city-wide.

% Fully Supported in Language and Cognition

Legend: ■ 2017 ■ 2020

Zone 5
- 2017: 66%
- 2020: 48%

(x-axis: 0% 20% 40% 60% 80%)
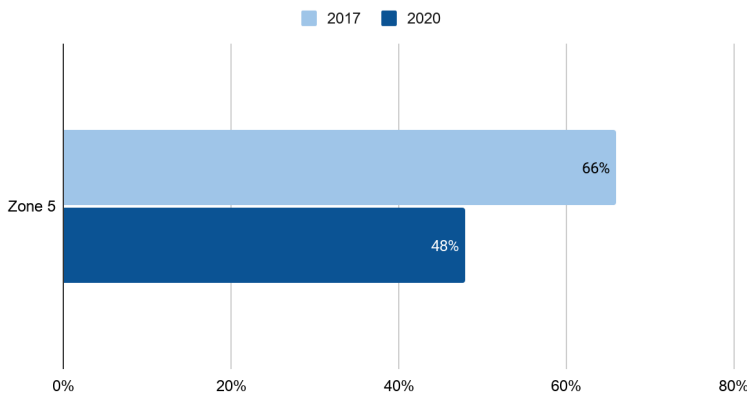
"**You don't see enough resources** as far as food, gas, especially places for our children to go. They are our future. They need somewhere to go and play. And it is good for parents because they get to meet who's in their community. So I think it's very important that we need to improve that." -Yolanda Monroe, Parent of 2
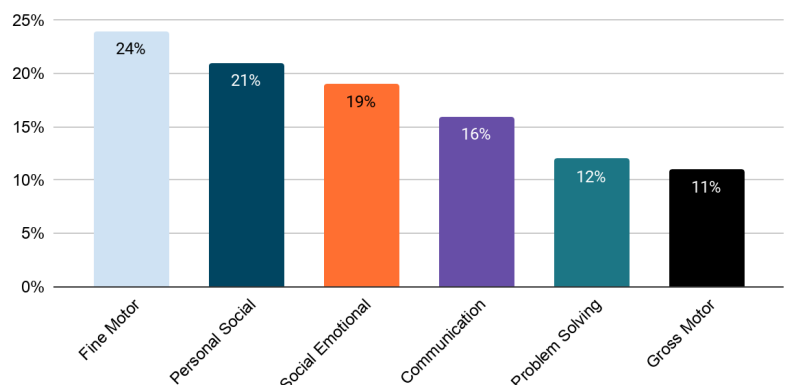
Opportunity for Change: The San Antonio Park Community Resource Center would be a hub where residents of all ages can gather for outdoor activities, sports, and cultural events so everyone can find support and connection.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire

Parents and caregivers report that their children need more services to support their fine motor and personal social skills.

"If [parents] know what are the challenges, how can the children grow and what are the barriers to their growth, they can advocate for their children and ask [policymakers] to support their children." -Rajni Chauhan

Zone 5 OUSD Preschool Children in Need of More Supports, As Reported by Parents/Caregivers

- Fine Motor: 24%
- Personal Social: 21%
- Social Emotional: 19%
- Communication: 16%
- Problem Solving: 12%
- Gross Motor: 11%

(y-axis: 0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25%)

Opportunity for Change: The San Antonio Park Community Resource Center would include playgroups for children from 0-5 years old, parent support groups, and classes on topics such as multicultural cooking, healthy eating/living and computers.

The Child Care Landscape

Availability of Child Care

33%

67%
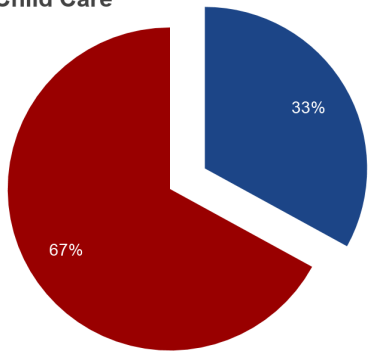
● Children for Whom Child Care is Available   ● Children for Whom Child Care is Unavailable

In 2019, Alameda County only had enough licensed child care for **33%** of young children with working parents. And...

51%

of 2018-19 Zone 5 kindergarten families traveled outside of their zone for child care that meets their needs.

73% of all licensed Oakland **family child care providers** reported that they are open as of February 2021
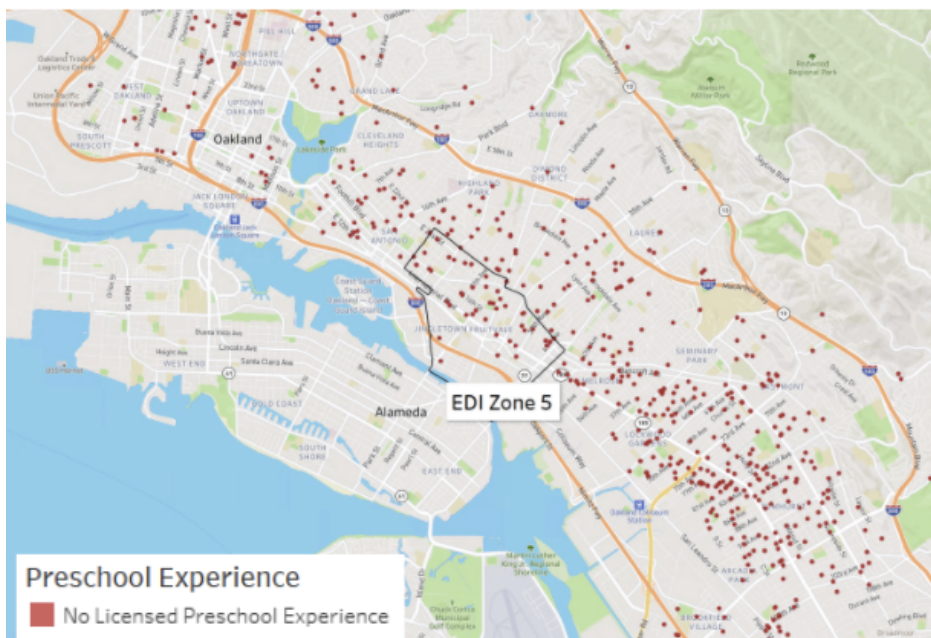
229 of 314

49% of all licensed Oakland **centers** reported that they are open as of February 2021

70 of 144

The pandemic has exacerbated the child care shortage as many licensed facilities have closed. Moreover, Oakland has only enrolled 33% of eligible children in subsidized child care.

EDI Zone 5

Preschool Experience
■ No Licensed Preschool Experience

Research by Parent Voices Oakland suggests that families with the least stability are the most likely to have problems accessing child care and have higher levels of mistrust about formal child care. And Oakland families' biggest worry about child care is that they can't get it.[1]

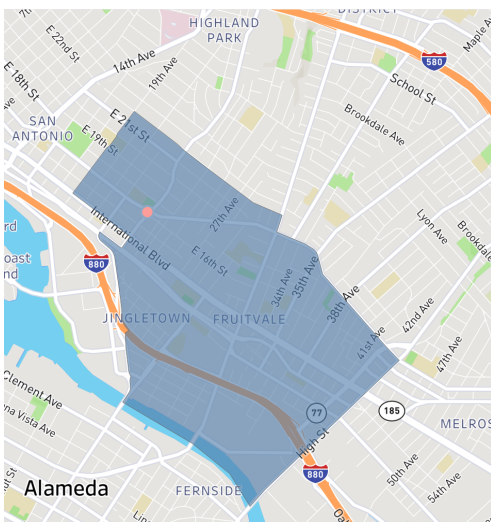1 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tu_y-0V7NU_ufaT4PIuf1WZLWTjedAqz/view

Community Assets

**"We need more resources and places for the kids
in the community, that's _known_."** -Yolanda Monroe, Parent of 2

Faith-Based Centers

Parks

Grocery Stores

Zone 5 needs a strong ECEcosystem that is targeted to meet the needs of <u>every</u> family.

1,770
residents have kids
under 6 years old

74%
of families have all
parents/caregivers working[2]

47%
Of families have one
parent or caregiver

39%
Of families with children
are experiencing poverty

69%
Of 2020-21 kindergarteners
qualify for the Free &
Reduced-Price Meal Program

"Our families in Oakland need to be safe and successful. We want our neighborhood to be safe and such a space that our kids are growing."
Rajni Chauhan, Parent of 2