



OAKLAND KIDS FIRST

Impact Report

2022 - 2023



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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Lukas Brekke-Miesner

Dear community of supporters,

As I wrap up my fifth year as Executive Director and fourteenth year at Oakland Kids First (OKF), it is incredible to see how far OKF has come. Our commitment to Oakland youth has remained unwavering, but our work has grown a lot in recent years. We have evolved from the youth development and peer mentorship organization I joined in 2009, into an organization deeply committed to building youth power and cultivating effective community schools. Running large scale campaigns like Measure QQ to pass Oakland Youth Vote has sharpened our practice and grown our impact while growing a direct service arm of our organization has increased the number of youth we can support to successfully navigate high school and access postsecondary opportunities each year.

During the 2022-2023 school year, we engaged a record 775 Oakland students from the five largest high schools in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). Our REAL HARD chapters, citywide Youth Organizing Council, and Castlemont community school initiatives have been our bedrock for the past few years, but this year we also launched a Skyline chapter of REAL HARD, started Castle Cares case management, distributed over \$13,000 in financial assistance through our Student Relief Fund and increased the number of stipended internships we provide.

OKF staff and student organizers continued to propel the Oakland Youth Vote (OYV) Coalition with our steadfast community partners the Oakland Youth Commission (OYC), OUSD's All City Council Student Union (ACC), AYPAL and Californians for Justice (CFJ).

We previously made history when 67% of Oakland voters passed Measure QQ in November 2020, which extended voting rights to 16 and 17 year-olds in Oakland school board elections. Since then we've been grinding to bring our youths' vision to fruition. Frustrated by delays in implementation - but not defeated - the OYV coalition took on additional organizing to ensure the Alameda County Board of Supervisors that oversees the Registrar of Voters take action before another election cycle passes without accommodations for youth voters. The OYV Coalition is also helping to build an infrastructure and curriculum for OUSD to help civically engage students and prepare youth voters to participate in school board elections. Not only will teens have the right to vote, but they will be prepared to vote.

We are excited to share that this planning and pressure paid off. In July, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors directed the Registrar of Voters to develop the voting systems needed to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote! This will not only enfranchise Oakland youth voters, but pave the way for Berkeley's dormant 2016 youth vote win (Measure Y1) to be implemented as well.

All of this happened during a school year that included an OUSD teacher strike in May, with many youth across our programs staying home in support of the teachers' demands for better pay and more equitable conditions in schools. The following pages of this report go into greater depth about the incredible year that we had.

It is supporters like you who enable OKF to amplify youth voice and build student power.

Thank you!
Lukas Brekke-Miesner, Executive Director



About Oakland Kids First

Oakland Kids First (OKF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our mission is to increase youth voice, leadership and power to create engaging and equitable public schools where all students learn and lead. Founded in 1996 as a coalition of community organizations (pictured above), OKF has long partnered with students on systems change and organizing campaigns to meet the needs of low-income, BIPOC youth in Oakland, CA.

We believe youth are the experts of their own experience, and therefore are equipped to evaluate, innovate and govern the institutions that are supposed to serve them. As Kenny, one OKF leader at Oakland Tech explained, "Unless you're inside the school house, people can guess and read statistics, but they don't actually know what's happening or what issues inside of schools are. Youth experience OUSD schools every day and have insights into how to lead efforts to solve problems." OKF prepares and empowers students to draw from their experiences to improve educational equity in schools in order to build power for all Oakland students.

Each year, OKF has a goal of engaging 115 high school students in youth development and organizing programs, and an additional 500 students in Castlemont community school initiatives such as our Knight Success, Knight Time and Castle Cares programs to support academic achievement, postsecondary planning, and college, career and community readiness. OKF's REAL HARD after school program and Youth Organizing Council engage youth from five campuses to plan and lead campaigns that improve educational equity and racial justice in Oakland schools. By conducting annual cycles of youth participatory action research that inform campaigns, OKF leaders reach an additional 3,000+ people in broad base-building efforts to grow collective power for students.

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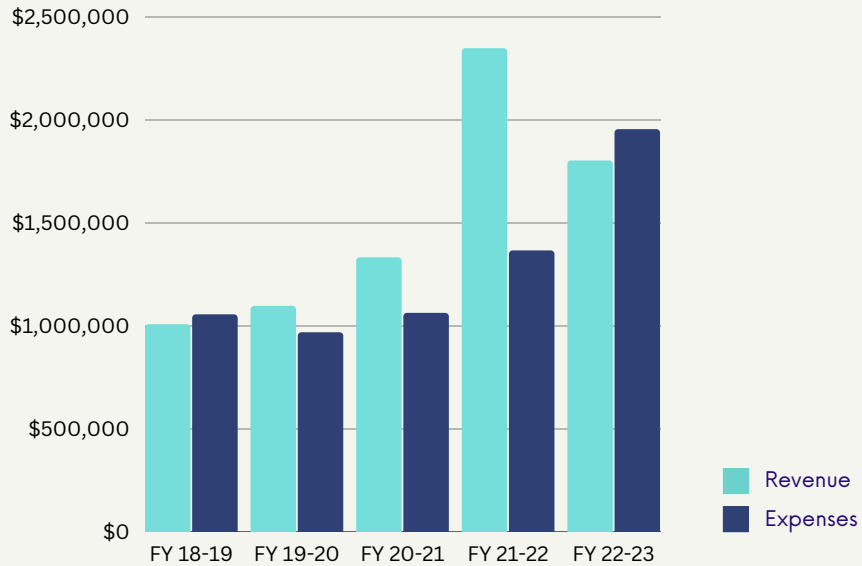
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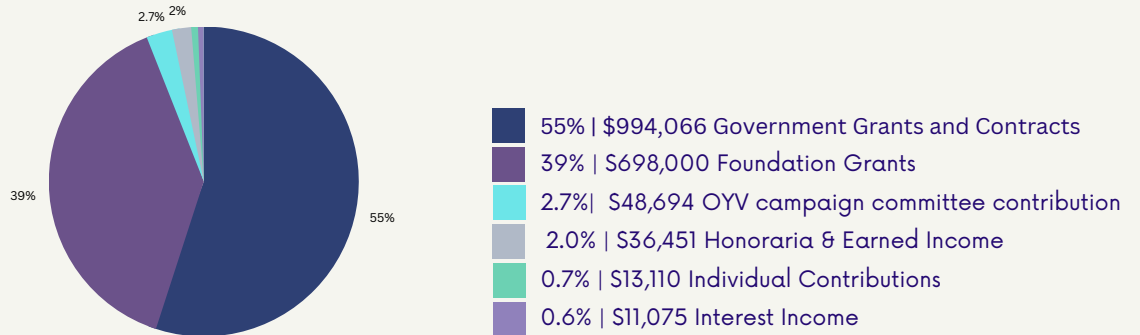
info@KidsFirstOakland.org

Financials

OKF's budget has increased in recent years through support and partnership from foundations providing multi-year general operating grants, and through several new government contracts to support Castlemont community school initiatives. Note, the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures in spring 2020 and the 2020-2021 school year resulted in a reduction in expenses.



Breakdown of 22-23 Revenue Sources:



FY July 1, 22- Jun 30, 23 Budget Breakdown





2022-2023 Goals

Oakland Kids First programs are designed to address the material conditions, policies and practices that affect student experiences in OUSD schools. We empower young people through foundational political education, leadership and facilitation skills, and organizing tactics to advance transformational educational justice. OKF develops and supports individual students, while helping them fight for systemic change.

1 Scale Youth Leadership Programs and Sharpen Organizing Practices

Provide REAL HARD youth leadership programming after school for 100 students at five of the largest high schools in OUSD, and empower 15 students from across campuses in a Youth Organizing Council to research then lead city or district wide campaigns that improve school culture, climate and education equity in order to amplify youth voice and build student power across Oakland.

2 Leverage Coalitions for Student Power Building

Work in coalition to build student power and lead citywide efforts to implement Oakland Youth Vote (OYV) by providing strategic leadership, capacity and fundraising for OYV Coalition and OYV youth members in a Core Leaders Committee.

3 Provide Student Support Services at Castlemont High School

Serve as lead agency of Castlemont high school's full service community school initiatives and provide college, career and community readiness opportunities for 500 students each year including: Knight Time Extended Day Programs for 400 students after school, academic support for 300 youth, stipended workforce readiness internships and career preparation for 250 students, and care management for 30+ youth most at risk of not graduating.



Annual Outcomes and Impacts:

Goal 1 **Scale Youth Leadership Programs and Sharpen Organizing Practices**

153

OKF engaged 153 youth leaders at Oakland's five largest public high schools. Students conducted research and held focus groups to develop campus campaigns rooted in the Student Justice Platform to improve school culture and climate.

78%

By the end of the program, 78% of youth leaders shared they "believe students have ownership of culture at school and student contributions helped to make a better and more positive school environment," and that they "believe all students can do well in school, thrive and succeed in the right conditions."

12

12 organizers from 5 schools convened weekly in OKF's Youth Organizing Council (YOC) to advance their Student Justice Platform priorities and implement Oakland Youth Vote (OYV). After participating in YOC, with activities geared towards OYV Implementation, 90% of YOC members agreed that they gained a strong understanding of what it means to have and build power and they can explain how Oakland Youth Vote is important to building power for students.

23

23 students attended OKF's first Summer Organizing Institute. Top skills gained: building a base; collaborating with other youth and adults, and public speaking.

Student Justice Platform

An overview of the Student Justice platform is included below and more can be found on our website oaklandyouthvote.org/student-justice-platform.

Students are the experts of our own experiences. Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) must center our voices in its decision-making processes. Our Student Justice Platform outlines demands from over 1,400 student surveys from across the district and we demand OUSD Board Directors implement these priorities.

WE DEMAND ACCESS TO HEALTH & WELLNESS

OUSD must provide resources and curriculum to support all students' mental health and physical wellness in and out of the classroom.



Our specific demands include:

- Sanitary supplies: soap, tissue, toilet paper, tampons/pads
- Daily maintenance of bathrooms and student common areas
- Clean facilities that are open so students can access them within a reasonable timeframe
- A Health class that teaches us: first-aid training, nutrition education, how to maintain proper hygiene
- Curriculum that teaches us how to cope with stress and process emotions
- Provide students with one excused mental health / sick day per month

WE DEMAND COMMUNITY-CENTERED SCHOOLS

OUSD must cultivate environments rooted in student leadership, experience-based learning, and belonging to create safety for all students.



Our specific demands include:

- Offer students more hands-on opportunities and experiential learning
- Provide more community building opportunities into classroom time that foster collaboration and promotes positive school culture
- Adopt teaching practices that create safe, high-quality, and compassionate classrooms.
- Opportunities for students to give regular structured feedback to staff to improve campus culture and classroom practices.
- Mandated Board Director participation in school activities and events such as: campus culture walks, sporting events, student and/or family forums, meetings with leadership and teachers.

WE DEMAND ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS

OUSD must provide all students with the necessary skills and resources to successfully navigate life beyond school.



Our specific demands include:

- Financial Literacy such as: Budgeting, Taxes, Credit, Loans
- Housing Assistance, Processes, and Rights
- Electives with Career Exploration Opportunities
- Jobs Training Opportunities and Internships
- Hire additional Counselors to Increase College, Career and Life Planning Support
- Driver's Education made available during the school day



Youth Quotes:

What OKF participants shared about the impact of their involvement in YOC and REAL HARD

“Measure QQ gives students the opportunity to vote for someone they believe will make their learning environment a better place and someone who cares for the students. It gives them the power to influence a system that directly impacts them” (11th grade organizer from Fremont).

YOC is important to “building power because if OYV gets implemented it builds students voices, giving us some sort of power over our environment, And hopefully improving our schools.” “I like the community [in YOC] and how many people I’ve met from so many different schools. It’s really cool that I’ve gotten to know that so many students across the district do care about political problems just as much as I do” (Amaya Lopez, 12th grade organizer, Oakland High).

“I really liked the community made within the [YOC] space. I feel like I am leaving this program with new friends. Also I feel like I have a better understanding of what it means to fight for change and speak up when something isn’t right” (Mira Misuluti, 12th grade organizer, Oakland Tech).

REAL HARD was a “great way to learn new things and make new friends” (Torrian Coats, 9th grader, Skyline).

REAL HARD has “a very strong sense of community and engaging interactions between students” (Amy Ma, 11th grader, Fremont).



Goal 2 Leverage Coalitions for Student Power Building

OKF spearheaded the ongoing work of the Oakland Youth Vote (OYV) Coalition and counts AYPAL, Californians For Justice (CFJ), OUSD's All City Council Student Union (ACC), and the city's Oakland Youth Commission as our fellow members. Together with the youth and adult allies of our coalition we've achieved the following:

1000

Educated over 1,000 youth on the importance of civic engagement and youth democracy

480

Pre-registered over 480 youth voters across Oakland high schools

PASSED

Developed the Supporting the Implementation of Measure QQ in High Schools Resolution that unanimously passed the OUSD school board vote on June 22nd, 2022

100%

100% of OUSD School Board Candidates pledged to support Oakland Youth Vote implementation and attended the student-led forum

We are excited to announce that last month, after months of applying pressure, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors finally directed The Registrar of Voters to implement Oakland Youth Vote by the 2024 election! This should enfranchise thousands of teen voters in Oakland each election cycle and also resuscitate Berkeley's Measure Y1 after it passed in 2016, but was never implemented. We are excited for this movement on such a critical issue for building youth power in the Bay Area!



Goal 3 Provide student support services at Castlemont High School

577

- 577 total students engaged
- 404 students received academic support through tutoring, credit recovery, language translation and dual enrollment activities
- 293 students completed stipended workforce readiness internships
- 189 9th graders received support to successfully transition into high school and build community through Knight Bridge and Knight Round Tables
- 164 people attended community engagement and food distribution events including a Fall Harvest festival and end of semester celebrations.

85%

85% of respondents in English and 88% in Spanish agreed the programs "offered me the support needed to successfully prepare for college, career and community."

72%

72% in English and 78% in Spanish agreed with the statement "this program increased my desire to stay in school and graduate."



Helping Students with the Greatest Need for Support:

52

OKF piloted a Castle Cares program as part of our community school initiatives at Castlemont high school to provide targeted case management, small group support and life skills training for a cohort of students identified to be most at risk of not graduating. 52 individuals received one on one care management and 8 out of 9 seniors successfully graduated on time in May.

\$13K

OKF's Student Relief Fund supported 26 individual youth experiencing crises and distributed over \$13,340 in direct cash assistance to ensure students had access to stable housing, food, personal hygiene items, clothing, transportation and needed social services.



Preparing Youth with Workforce Readiness Skills and Career Exposure

\$343K

OKF distributed \$343,162 in youth stipends for students participating in youth leadership development, youth organizing, community based internships, CastleWorks internships and Castle Cares activities

104

104 Castlemont students attended college visits and presentations to explore career paths through potential majors and postsecondary studies

83

83 Castlemont students gained career exposure and connections to employers by participating in a career fair



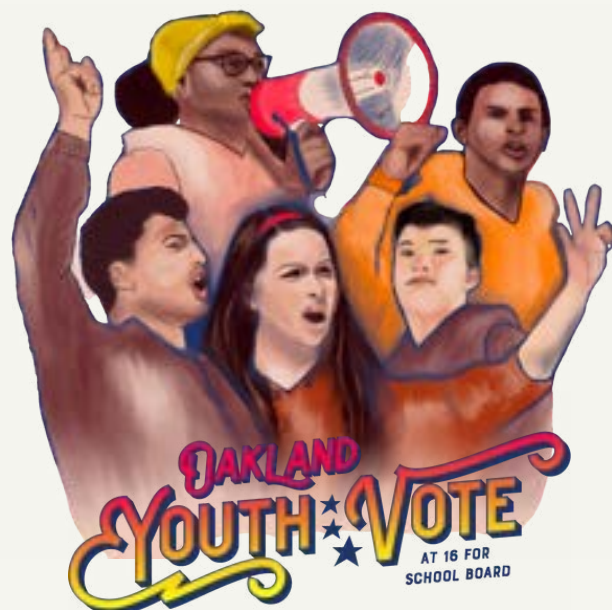
Partner Organizations

Partnership and coalition building are core to OKF's values and approach empowering youth to advance educational equity or racial justice campaigns. OKF centers the voice, experience, and leadership of young people in shared or adult-led spaces in order to build their power and agency in making positive changes.

OKF is a long-standing partner of OUSD's Student, Family & Community Engagement Office and All City Council Student Union. OKF also works in close partnership with school principals and lead agencies to integrate REAL HARD into after school programs including with the lead agencies BACR at Fremont and Oakland Tech; EBAYC at Oakland High School; Youth Together (YT) at Skyline; and OKF's own staff who direct the Knight Time and Knight Success programs at Castlemont.

OKF is part of two coalitions. We are a founding organization of the Justice for Oakland Students (J4OS) Coalition and are the anchor organization of the Oakland Youth Vote Coalition (OYV). OYV also established a Core Leaders Committee specifically for youth members of each organization that OKF also helps to facilitate.

Coalition partners include: Oakland Youth Commission (OYC), OUSD's All City Council Student Union (ACC), AYPAL, Californians for Justice (CFJ), Youth Together (YT), Bay Area PLAN, Parents United for Public Schools, and Parent Voices.



Recent Press

Meet Ixchel Arista — A Youth Organizer Pushing to Increase Youth Political Inclusion in Oakland
June 30, 2023



[Meet Ixchel Arista – A Youth Organizer Pushing to Increase Youth Political Inclusion in Oakland](#) Bay Area Equity Atlas. June 30, 2023.



[Youth Organizers Build Alliances to Win the World We Need](#)

“In a rigorous process of mapping and making alliances, running and assessing campaigns, youth organizers are amplifying their power to drive transformative change.”

Christopher June Zizzamia,
Jonathan Bix, [Lukas Brekke-Miesner](#), and Viridiana Hernandez.
Convergence. May 10, 2023.



[These teens won the right to vote. Their county disenfranchised them.](#)

“High school activists in California fought hard to lower the voting age only to be ignored.” Moriah Balingit. The Washington Post. November 30, 2022.



[Mental health, safety, and closures take center stage at Oakland school board candidate forum](#)

“Dozens of students, families, and other community members attended a youth-led school board forum on Tuesday night, where all nine of the candidates discussed their platforms and visions for the district.” Ashley McBride. The Oaklandside. October 19, 2022.



[Berkeley and Oakland Passed Measures to Let 16 and 17-Year Olds Participate in School Board Elections. So Why Can't They Vote Yet?](#) Carolyn Jones. KOED-EdSource. August 8, 2022.



funders' collaborative on youth organizing

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OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Community Schools, Thriving Students



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advancing health equity



Thank you to our funders, donors and volunteers. Our work truly is not possible without your generous support!