



Turning Points
2020 ≡

Education



Photo credit: Stephanie Secrest

When children enter kindergarten with the skills and enthusiasm to learn, they are better prepared to succeed in school and life.

An Extraordinary Community Response

Young learners and their Oakland families felt the immediate impact of the coronavirus pandemic when schools closed. The Kenneth Rainin

Foundation's Education grantees and partners quickly mobilized to provide critical resources and care during an unprecedented year. Teachers, tutors, schools, and community organizations came together in extraordinary ways to support children and families. We remain committed to ensuring that every child enters kindergarten ready to learn and able to thrive. We know that listening to our community will lead us forward.

“Our grantees are still dreaming big. They want to do great things for their community despite huge setbacks and challenges. We are dreaming with them—to reimagine systems and spaces for learning that are child-centered and equity-focused.”

—**Shaheena Khan**, Director, Education Strategy & Ventures



Photo credit: August de Richelieu, Pexels

Parents and caregivers stewarded their children's online learning during an unprecedented year.

A Convergence Of Inequities

In March, shelter-in-place orders forced severe disruptions to schooling and childcare, along with children's access to meals and social interaction. Teachers pivoted to online instruction, but technology problems, language barriers and a significant digital divide impacted students' ability to learn. As childcare and preschool sites closed, parents struggled to support and care for their families, while also stewarding their children's online learning.

Racial, social and economic inequities often converge in educational systems, and the pandemic exposed widespread disparities. The

burdens of pre-existing food and housing insecurities were compounded by the threats of a new, life-threatening disease. Young learners and their families who were living on the margins before the pandemic bore the uneven weight of this crisis. Solutions to long-standing, interlocking problems like these are energized by community knowledge and engagement. As we mounted our own philanthropic response, we prioritized listening while balancing speed, equity and strategy.

“Families already have a wealth of knowledge and abilities. They are resilient and innovative and they deeply care about their child’s success in school.”

—**Teneh Weller**, Executive Director, High Expectations



Photos courtesy of Oakland REACH

Oakland REACH launched its Citywide Virtual Hub in June to ensure families received high-quality remote instruction.

Supporting Families In An Unprecedented Time

Oakland has a strong network of community-based organizations working in early childhood education. With a deep understanding and connection to their communities, they made rapid pivots to provide safety-net services around family needs. Our grantees and partners were essential in helping us direct resources where they would have the greatest impact on Oakland's children.

Community organizations shifted to meeting critical basic needs to take care of their communities. **Head Start** provided cash assistance for essentials like food, rent, diapers and baby formula. The **Partnership for Children and Youth** coordinated drop-offs of food and learn-at-home resources for families in affordable housing. **Literacy Lab** expanded their learning content platform to connect families to homeless shelters, food banks and health clinics.

Grantees also pivoted to offer distance-learning support and address the realities of Oakland's digital divide. After listening to families, **Oakland REACH** created the **Citywide Virtual Hub**. The Hub provided summer learning and literacy instruction to 200 students, and workshops and resources for parents to be leaders in their children's learning. **High Expectations** and **Bay Area Parent Learning Action Network** partnered to offer virtual trainings to help families support and motivate reading. **CARES For Learning** curated parent and teacher resources for literacy development and purchased and delivered 400 tablets and laptops to SEEDS of Learning students. Throughout the year, we were humbled by our communities' immediate and on-target responses to support learning.



Photo credit: Eric H. Peterson, BANANAS

Oakland's annual in-person Early Learning Symposium was reimaged into a series of virtual workshops to support childcare providers.

Valuing Our Early Learning Community

The COVID-19 crisis dramatically impacted the dedicated individuals who care for and educate Oakland's babies, toddlers and preschoolers in both formal and informal settings. A multi-agency collaborative recognized the importance of supporting these early learning caregivers who would be providing care for the children of essential workers. They responded by reimagining their second annual **Oakland Early Learning Symposium** as a yearlong workshop series. Virtual sessions addressed online learning and support, family resources, and how to reopen childcare safely. They also created opportunities for educators to meet between sessions and support one another in learning communities.



4,500



Building On The Success Of SEEDS

Since 2014, the Rainin Foundation has invested in and implemented SEEDS of Learning to help children be ready for kindergarten. This innovative professional development and coaching model is based on current research in early childhood education. From the beginning, our goal has been to support the expansion of this proven literacy program to as many Oakland classrooms as possible. After years of planning, in **September we announced the launch of a new national literacy-building nonprofit, CARES for Learning, which became SEEDS'**

permanent home. The strong, committed team in Oakland includes **experienced staff and SEEDS coaches** working in the schools.

Transitioning SEEDS to its new home represents a success story, reflecting our commitment to collaboration and investments in promising, innovative ideas. It also unlocks opportunities for our Education grantmaking. We can go further to disrupt injustices in early childhood education to ensure that all students get a fair shot at success.

“I would like to tell my students, parents, and fellow instructors, don’t be afraid to make mistakes. You’re trying to adapt to something new and everyone is learning.”

—**Francis Jimenez**, Teaching Instructor, Achieve Academy



Photos courtesy of Daisy and Francis

Daisy Barrera (left), transitional kindergarten tutor at Cox Academy, and Francis Jimenez (right), teaching instructor at Achieve Academy, embraced SEEDS of Learning strategies to help young learners and their families adapt to virtual learning.

Transforming The Learning Ecosystem

Access to high-quality education determines a child's trajectory for success in life. We believe our investments can help transform learning ecosystems and produce equitable results for Oakland families. Achieving this vision requires us to take a more holistic approach to dismantle the layers of systemic oppression that affect students of color.

At the heart of our **new approach are four equity levers**—Teaching and Learning, Support for Families and Communities, Public Policy, and Strategic Networks. When operating together in a learning ecosystem, these levers can lead to excellence and improved outcomes for children. Promising solutions are surfacing through our recent collaborations.

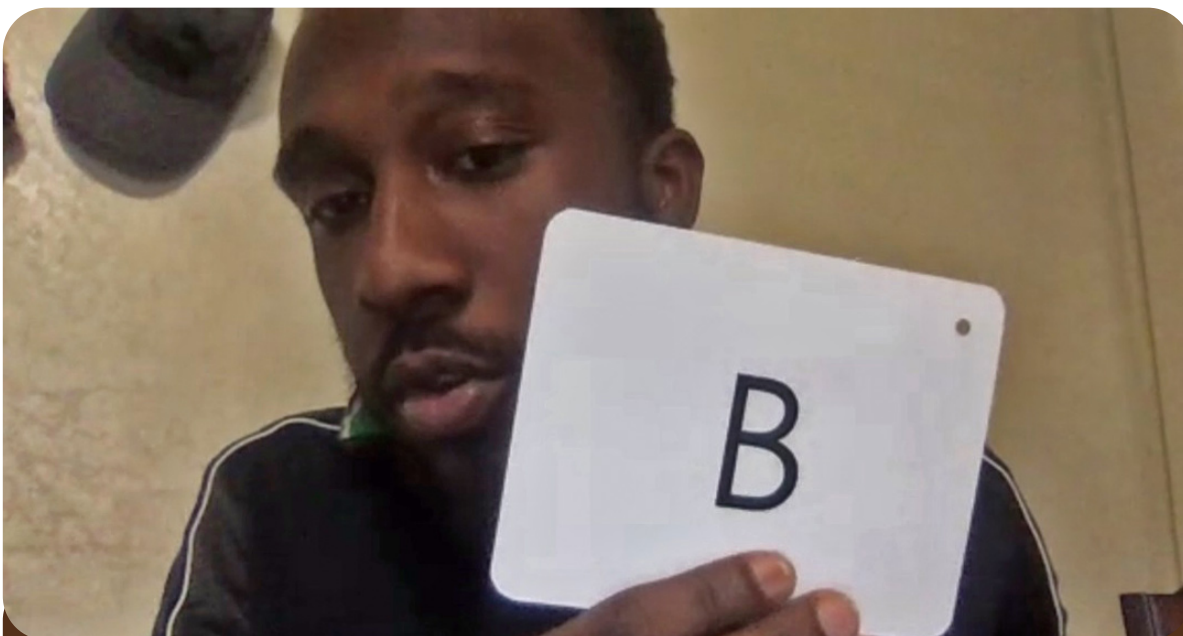


Photo courtesy of Anthony Johnson

Anthony Johnson, a Teaching Fellow with the Men of Color Early Education program, helps young students gain early literacy skills.

Diversifying The Teacher Pipeline

Research confirms important **academic benefits when students of color have teachers that look like them**. This is especially true for boys—but not nearly enough men of color are teaching in our classrooms. To address this gap, the Foundation funded the **Men of Color Early Education Teaching Fellows** pilot program. Launched at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, the program partners CARES of Learning and Oakland Unified School District's Office of Equity and Office of Early Childhood Education. Building on the proven SEEDS of Learning model, it trains community members to be highly skilled classroom tutors. It combines professional

development, life skills, mentors, educational opportunities and other wrap-around supports for men of color to enter and succeed in the field of teaching. It is an exciting example of how we are centering equity in teaching and learning.

“The Men of Color Early Literacy Project provides young scholars with foundational literacy skills and a positive sense of self by engaging males of color from the community as tutors.”

—**Taji Brown**, Program Manager, Early Childhood Education, Oakland Unified School District Office of Equity

COMMUNITY REFLECTION BY TENEH
WELLER

Reflecting On Family Resilience

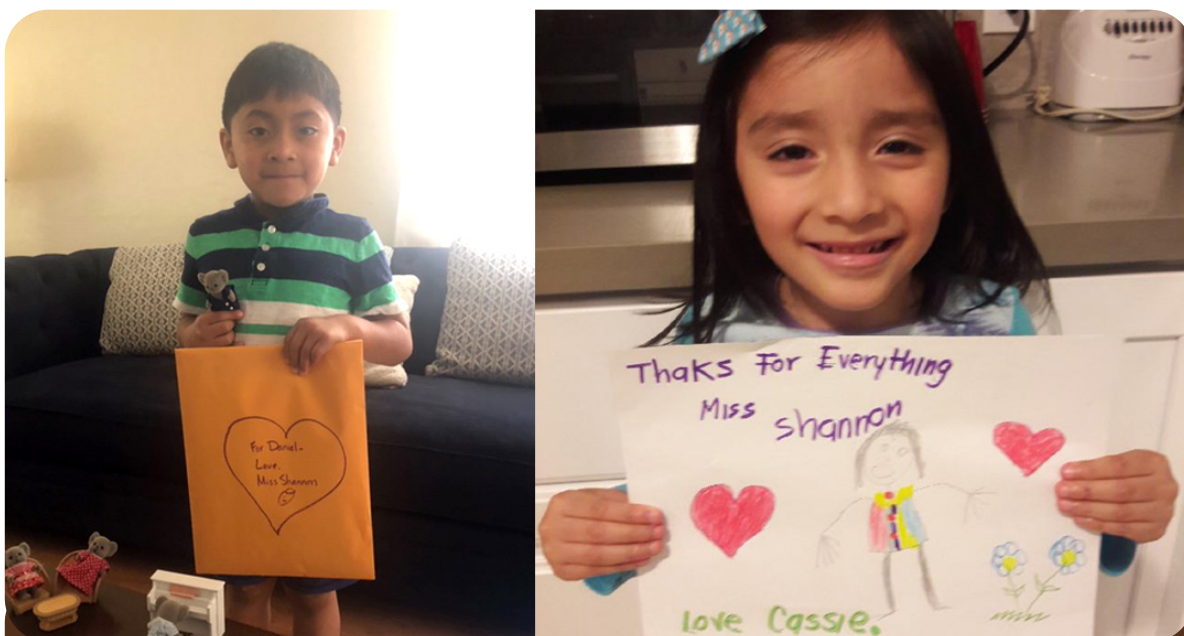


COVID-19 and its shelter-in-place orders brought enormous hardships to many families. Parents shared concerns about their child's learning loss during school closures. High Expectations responded by offering families books, literacy tools, and strategies to support their child's reading success. During our meetings, they shared the creative ways they were teaching, motivating and encouraging their child. Our team was reminded that families already have a wealth of knowledge and abilities. They are resilient and innovative and they deeply care about their child's success in school. **Continue reading this reflection by Teneh Weller, Executive Director of High Expectations >**

Trusting Community Wisdom

Community input and expertise are pivotal to understanding the systems and policies impacting Oakland's early learners and devising right-fit solutions. Our equity levers elevate the role of parents and caregivers in ensuring their children's educational success. Their wisdom is as powerful as the love and dreams they have for their children. But we recognize that families and community leaders need access and resources to influence decisions and bring about meaningful change.

In 2020, we invited community leaders to join teachers, school leaders, administrators and literacy coaches on our **Community Strategy Council for Educational Equity and Excellence**. The lived experience, relationships and leadership of this group ground our strategies in community knowledge. The Council will play a fundamental role in shifting our investments toward participatory grantmaking, power-sharing, and democratic decision-making. Its members brought essential knowledge and guidance to our grantmaking during the pandemic.



Photos courtesy of East Bay Agency for Children

East Bay Agency for Children supported families and young learners through the challenges of remote learning.

Supporting Student Well-Being And Learning

Throughout an unprecedented year, we marveled at the **dedicated teachers** and organizations that are the hearts of our communities. Their work focused on addressing critical needs and strengthening resources for Oakland's early learners and their families. The **East Bay Agency for Children** and **Lotus Bloom Family Resource Center** provided literacy-rich, early childhood programs and parent supports. The **Oakland Literacy Coalition** distributed over 22,000 culturally affirming books to nurture children's love of reading and build their home

libraries. The **Mindful Life Project** provided social-emotional resources to support children's and teacher's well-being through weekly mindfulness lessons. All of our grantees were essential to weathering the year's uncertainties—and inspiring hope.



Photo courtesy of Diane Carter

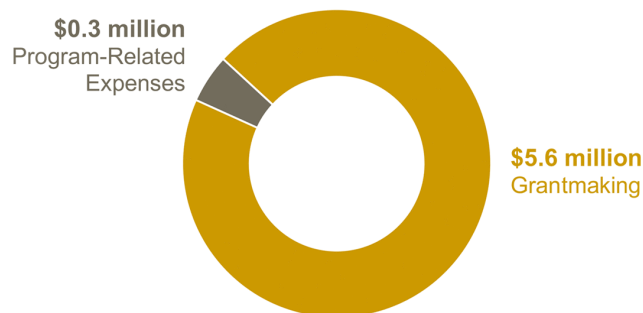
Diane Carter, a transitional kindergarten teacher at Cox Academy, creatively used videos to teach her students remotely.

Investing In Early Learning Partners: 2020 Grantees

The Rainin Foundation invested nearly \$6 million in 2020 to improve literacy among Oakland's children.

This included COVID-19 responsive grants to organizations that provided essential resources to Oakland families during the pandemic. Education grantmaking supports programs that help ensure Oakland children are ready for kindergarten and on track for third grade reading success.

Note: Financials are subject to audit verification.



We are honored to partner with these schools and community-based organizations who are helping children become confident, capable and joyful learners. [View more information](#) about these grants.

Aspire Public Schools

Community School for Creative Education

Book Nook in partnership with Super Stars Literacy

Book Trust

CARES for Learning

City of Oakland Head Start

Community School for Creative Education

East Bay Agency for Children

Education for Change

Friends of the Oakland Public Library

High Expectations in partnership with the Bay Area
Parent Learning Action Network

Lincoln

Literacy Lab

Lotus Bloom Family Resource Center

Mindful Life Project

Oakland Literacy Coalition

Oakland Public Education Fund for the Early Learning
Symposium

Oakland Reach

Oakland Unified School District

National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the
University of Chicago

Partnership for Children and Youth in partnership with
Reading with Relevance

Reach out and Read

Reading Partners

Springboard Collaborative—Summer

Tandem, Partners in Early Learning

Explore the Foundation's website to
learn more about our Education

program and meet our **staff** and
Board members.

Turning Points 2020

ARTS

EDUCATION

HEALTH

ENHANCING LIFE

The Kenneth Rainin Foundation enhances quality of life by championing the arts, promoting early childhood literacy, and supporting research to cure chronic disease. [more >](#)



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