THE UNSPOKEN PANDEMIC
OAKLAND’S EDUCATION CRISIS
Dear FIA Community and Friends,

For the first time in two years, we have a clear, citywide picture of the state of academics in Oakland. After the pandemic shut down “normal” school operations in March of 2020, the data in this report is the first comprehensive look at how Oakland public school students are faring after almost two years of virtual learning.

The picture is a familiar one, with schools above the 580 – for the most part – continuing to outperform those in the heartlands of the city. In 2023, we see that academic excellence is still hard to find.

At FIA, we are here to ignite the passion and commitment of citywide leaders to come together with parents, youth, educators, and community to take notice and take action.

We believe that being transparent about where we are is the first step on the journey to create excellence and equity in public education across the 'Town. Our children deserve nothing less.

The first part of this report will look at how Oakland public schools did in reading and math, two critical academic indicators that show whether or not students are performing on grade level. The report also includes graduation rates and A–G college eligibility.

Kimi Kean
Co-founder and CEO
Families in Action for Quality Education
While the vast majority of Oakland students attend a district-run or charter public school, 11% attend private schools, completely opting out of the public school system. Nearly 1 in 3 students attend charter public schools.

During the pandemic, private school applications and enrollment in Oakland increased. If our public schools are to flourish, Oakland educational leaders must understand and prioritize what parents value when they are choosing a quality school.

**Oakland Students by School Type**
- District-Run: 61%
- Charter: 28%
- Private: 11%

**Oakland Students by Demographic**
- LatinX: 49%
- White: 9%
- Black: 21%
- Asian: 11%
- Other: 10%

* Includes data from all public schools located in Oakland, including district-run, charter, county-authorized, and alternative

**Oakland public school students**
- 70% qualify for free or reduced lunch.
- 33% are English Language Learners.
- 14% are students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) who receive Special Education services.
- Latinos make up the largest ethnic group, followed by Black, Asian, and White students.
- 61% of Oakland students attend OUSD-run schools, 28% attend charter schools, and 11% attend private or parochial schools.
Reading
The academic status of the schools matters, but growth matters too. Change doesn’t happen in a day, so how fast are Oakland public schools closing the gap with the state of California?

Over the last eight years, Oakland has increased its reading proficiency by a mere 4%. In Oakland, reading achievement is still well-below the statewide average with just 1 in 3 students reading at grade level.

Math
In math the results are far more concerning. Just 1 in 4 Oakland students can do math at grade level.

As both Oakland and California continue to demonstrate lackluster progress in moving students to grade level in either reading or math, we must ask ourselves, “Can we continue to wait for the system to change?”
OPPORTUNITY GAPS

Alarming math outcomes for students

Oakland is a beautifully diverse, but stratified city.

Just 16% of low income students are able to do math at grade level, 11% of students in Special Education, and 9% of English Learners.

Racial disparity is growing in math outcomes

The news is bleak for Oakland in math proficiency. As a result of the pandemic, we have returned to 2014-15 levels of math proficiency, essentially wiping out seven years of math progress and potential gains.

Ironically, Oakland is exactly where it started when the Local Control Funding Formula (Prop 30 of the time) was first implemented.
On track to fail

Reading disparities in Oakland mirror those in math. The color of your skin, IEP status, and your economic status clearly determine your access to a quality public education.

Over time, reading outcomes have changed little for Black and Brown students. When 2 in 10 of all Black and Brown students can read at grade level for multiple decades, have we become immune to our moral obligation to ensure a quality public education to every student? When will we demand quality for every child?

Why is it important that students read on grade level?

If a child is reading proficiently by the end of third grade, they are four times more likely to graduate from high school than their classmate who struggles with reading.
Is Oakland a progressive city?

Did all students citywide experience the same level of learning losses and gains over the last five years? No. And the knowledge gaps between groups are growing bigger.

To visualize the scale of this, imagine a classroom where you have 10 students each from the 4 largest student racial groups in Oakland (Black, Latinx, Asian, and White students). In a room filled with 40 diverse students, only 3 black and brown students can do math at grade-level.

- 1 out of every 10 Black students can do math at grade-level.
- 1 out of every 10 Latinx students can do math at grade-level.
- 5 out of every 10 Asian students can do math at grade-level.
- 6 out of every 10 White students can do math at grade-level.

Significant gaps remain between racial groups in reading and math proficiency levels, particularly between Black and Latinx students and Asian and White students. Regardless, all proficiency rates fall below the statewide averages.

Students who identify as English language learners or with disabilities are far from reaching groupwide proficiency levels. These are some of our most vulnerable students, and they are the least proficient in grade-level reading and math.
Historically, geography decided the fate of a family’s quest for access to quality schools, where zip codes and street names predetermined what schools a child could attend.

Plotting school proficiency rates across Oakland, we see that geography still overwhelmingly determines a child’s educational experience. Schools with high-performing math programs are still largely limited to the Oakland Hills and near Berkeley, mostly on one side of Highway 580.

There’s been an increase of schools with high-performing reading programs beyond historical boundaries like Highway 580, particularly in central Oakland with a few bright spots in east and deep east Oakland, but we have a ways to go to achieve equity.
Graduation rates dipped during the pandemic

Post-pandemic, the data shows deep divisions between students from different backgrounds. Four-year high school graduation rates declined to just 65% citywide in 2022.

In 2022, the number of high school dropouts rose to 555 across The ‘Town. Over 500 young people left Oakland high schools and did not return.

In 2022, just 4 of 10 students with disabilities graduated on time, and just 6 of 10 low-income students graduated on time. Just 5 of 10 English Learners earned their diploma in 4 years.
Oakland’s public charter schools show strong outcomes for Black and Brown students

Passing the set of A-G courses during high school makes you eligible to apply to a four-year CSU/UC university. Across The 'Town, there is a range of A-G completion rates. Many students are locked out of applying because of one "D" on their transcript. A-G is a critical gateway to higher education.

Which Oakland high schools are preparing students for admission to UC/CSU four-year colleges?

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### The Unspoken Pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name (* = Alternative School)</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic / Latine</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Students with Disabilities</th>
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</table>
How long will it take to get all of our children to grade level?

At The 'Town's current rate of improvement, it will take four generations of children to guarantee a quality education for all Oakland students.

If a child enters kindergarten today, they will enter a class where the proficiency rate is 27%, and by the time she graduates – if Oakland continues to progress at the same rate- the proficiency rate will be only 8% higher.

At Oakland’s current rate, it will take thirty years for our lowest performing groups to reach the proficiency rates White and Asian students have today.

We do not have to accept this trend; we can make education outcomes our top priority, right now.
Disrupt
LET’S INTERRUPT THE STATUS QUO

POLICYMAKERS
1. Commit to improving educational quality and outcomes as your top priority.
2. Set ambitious improvement goals for all students, including Black, and Brown students, and students with IEPs.
3. Radically realign resources to support student learning.
4. Transparently monitor progress with the public; build trust and partnership through mutual accountability.
5. Ensure all schools are partnering with families by being transparent about data, strategies, and feedback on those strategies.

SCHOOL LEADERS
We call on all schools to partner with families in their solutions for educational quality. This means:
1. Sharing the data transparently with families.
2. Sharing improvement strategies with families.
3. Getting family feedback on the implementation of improvement strategies.

PARENTS & STUDENTS
1. Don’t wait for the system to change.
2. Check your student’s most recent test scores and make sure your student is on grade level in reading and math. If not, plan with your student’s educational team to get them on track.
3. A-G Toolkit: Use the FIA tool kit to ensure your student is on track to complete high school, and they are A-G ready, meaning they are not only graduating but can attend UC or State schools if they so choose.

Learn more. Join the movement. fiaoakland.org
Piedmont Avenue Elementary (TK-5)
Accelerated gains for students during the pandemic in both reading and math. Reading rose by +14% for Black students and +29% for Latinx. Math scores rose by +9% for Black students and 22% for Latino students. Piedmont Ave is a school to learn from.

Cleveland Elementary (K-5)
A racially diverse school near Lake Merritt, Cleveland steadily improved proficiency rates for its Black students in reading and math. Black students at grade level in reading rose significantly, from 32% to 56% and in math from 27% to 36%.

Yu Ming Charter School (TK-8)
Exceptional outcomes for all subgroups at this Mandarin immersion school, notably Black students and students with IEPs. Yu Ming is Oakland’s top performing public school and one of the top 10 in California. In reading in 2022, 94% of Latinx students, 72% of Black students and 90% of all students reached grade level. Math results are even stronger.

AIMS College Prep (K-8)
Academic outcomes were significantly above the city average in math (51%) and reading (55%) for Black students. Latinx students have a strong performance in reading (48%). Laudable school-wide proficiency rates at 61% in reading and 57% in math.
Celebrate
CHECK OUT OUR BRIGHT SPOTS

**Melrose Leadership Academy (TK-8)**

Proficiency has more than doubled for Black and Brown students at Melrose in reading and math since 2017. At Melrose, the gap between student groups is narrowing. Bucking the citywide trend, both student groups also made gains in math in 2022.

**Downtown Charter Academy (6-8)**

One of Oakland’s highest-performing middle schools, Downtown Charter Academy has strong outcomes for Black students (82%) in reading and (45%) in math. Both Asian and Latino students at DCA surpass city averages in reading.

**Oakland Unity Middle School (6-8)**

Bucking the trend, Oakland Unity Middle posted reading gains for Black and Latino students during the pandemic. Black students have experienced a 3-fold increase in reading proficiency since 2017. Oakland Unity Middle is a school to study.

**LIFE Academy (6-12)**

During the pandemic, Life Academy student proficiency rates in both math and reading dramatically increased. Latinx student performance increased by +15% despite the challenges of virtual learning during the pandemic. Bucking the trend, math proficiency also increased during the pandemic at this 6-12 school focused on health careers.
This data should not be used to point fingers or to assign blame, but instead to light a fire under our city about the dire state of our academic quality in our public schools. For the last decade, we have allowed ourselves to become normalized to the idea that $\frac{1}{3}$ of Oakland’s students are able to read and do math on grade level.

The school spotlights show us that Oakland has schools that bucked the national trends during the pandemic. The ‘Town has incredible schools to learn from, both district and charter schools that are accelerating growth, producing high academic outcomes and moving toward educational equity. Will we learn from them? Will we build on what we know is possible? Will we scale what is working so that all our Oakland students can reach their full potential?

At FIA, we are inspired to put down our political divisions and join forces in our advocacy for higher quality schools. At the very least, our students deserve to be on par with our state averages, and at best, every student deserves to be able to read and do math on grade level.

The choice is upon us. The moment is now.

We are grateful to the many people that made this report possible. Big thank you to the FIA Quality Institute 2022 parents and youth for their powerful vision and leadership, to Carrie Chan for crunching the data, to Paul Byrd for graphic magic, to Dana Wellhausen for data verification and our FIA team for their dedication to quality.