



## MISSION

Inspire excellence and accelerate academic achievement amongst students and their families through institutionalizing systemic change in Oakland Unified School District.

AAPISA works to create a culture of belonging for Arab American and Asian Pacific Islander students through literacy supports, affinity spaces, representation, student advocacy, family engagement, and culturally responsive professional development to assist staff in effectively teaching and supporting AAPISA students. OUSD's roughly 6,000 Asian and Pacific Islander students in OUSD represent about 47 ethnicities from Southwest Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Islands. The highest numbers of non-English home languages among these students are Cantonese (1,663), Vietnamese (854), Arabic (403), Khmer (245), Mien (153), and Tongan (138). With Arab American only recently added to OUSD enrollment forms, there isn't as much data available on Arab American students. 727 students in OUSD currently report speaking Arabic at home, and approximately 80% of the Arab American student population is from Yemen.

## HIGHLIGHTS include:

- College Visits to Culturally Responsive Campuses
- Heritage Education and Celebrations
- Honor Roll Ceremonies
- The Oakland Pacific Islander Network's Academic and Senior Spring Celebration
- Pacific Islander College Night and Senior Retreat
- Professional Development on Culturally Responsive Practices for Students and Families
- Support for School Site Affinity Circles, Student Clubs and Student Leadership
- Takalam Arab Youth Leadership Program
- Targeted Literacy Programs

**FIRST YEAR ACTIVE: 2017**

**TARGETED SPECIALISTS:**  
Sabria Hassan, John Lauti

## IMPACT

### *Increased family engagement*

Only two years into offering affinity spaces for Arab families, the impact is visible. For example, engagement among Arab American families increases for events that honor cultural celebrations and practices like Ramadan.

By nurturing identity, connection, and belonging through sports, the rugby club has provided a creative strategy to engage with Pacific Islander students. Academic check-ins for participation has also motivated families to become more involved in their students' academic progress.

### *Increased Attendance/Reduced Chronic Absence*

At midyear, 74.5% of students enrolled in Arab American targeted support had positive attendance of 95% or more, in comparison to the district average of 29.2% positive attendance for Arab American students. And, 52% of students enrolled in Pacific Islander targeted support had positive attendance of 95% or more, in comparison to the district average of 17.8% positive attendance for Pacific Islander students.

### *Increased Literacy*

At midyear, 30% of students, based on their i-Ready assessment, were performing at or near grade level, or only one grade behind—compared to the district average of 18% for Arab American students.



## BEYOND THE DATA

Yahya, a Castlemont alum, initially showed disinterest and struggled academically and with attendance. Through building trusting relationships and receiving care and support by way of AAPISA's Arab American Advisory class, Yahya was making changes and successfully graduated in 2023 despite being told that he most likely would not be able to walk the stage. Yahya felt represented, which gave him the opportunity to feel empowered. Yahya not only walked the stage; he was also emcee for the Arab American Honor Roll Ceremony!

## THE POWER OF AAPISA

Pacific Islander Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Hawai'i Trip: The goal of the Pacific Islander SEL curriculum is to support students' sense of identity, belonging, culture, and purpose. After 26 weeks of classes, students visit Hawai'i to connect with the land, get their feet in the mud, and swim in the ocean. With opportunities for independent journaling, mentoring, peer check-ins, and collective reflection, the trip provides a transformative experience for students and staff.