



OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Community Schools, Thriving Students

Creating Joyful Schools

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Creating Joyful Schools

To Strengthen our Commitment to Providing Joyful Schools - we continue to focus our efforts on creating engaging and emotionally and physically safe learning spaces so that our students are excited to come to school.

As such, we have been committed to the following:

Facilitating Joyful Learning Spaces

- Providing spaces for the community to gather and celebrate each other
- Expanding outdoor spaces for youth
- Offering joyful activities during and after the school day and equitable access to the arts, sports, and outdoor adventures

Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

- All schools will increase daily attendance by 1% points compared to 2023-24
- All schools will decrease chronic absenteeism by 3% points compared to 2023-24.
- Implementing the **Show Up! Campaign** which aligns stakeholders, amplifies student voice, incentivizes students to play a more active role in their educational journey and show up to school, on time, every day.

Enhancing Overall Safety

- Our District prioritizes safety through strategic investments in five key areas: prevention, emergency preparedness, incident response, facilities, and cybersecurity.
 - We are making significant progress in enhancing facility infrastructure, establishing clear culture and climate expectations, strengthening systems for addressing public safety threats, and ensuring our schools are equipped to respond effectively during emergencies.
- **The George Floyd Resolution (GFR)** acts as a north star for reimagining how we ensure safety for our students.

2nd Annual Neighborhood Classic, East Oakland Pride Welcomes Castlemont & Dorsey High Football Teams

The 2nd Annual Neighborhood Classic brought together high school football teams (Castlemont in OUSD and Dorsey from LA), aiming to connect schools from underrepresented communities. The event celebrates football while fostering mentorship and inspiring younger students through the presence of older athletes. Attendees expressed joy and excitement, emphasizing the importance of community and shared experiences. Watch our Video on YouTube ↓



Creating Joyful Schools

Data Tells the Story

The safety of our students and staff remains paramount and we continue to evaluate our safety protocols to ensure our systems not only work as intended, but that our educators are all aligned in terms of their roles and responsibilities. Our Community Schools Student Services team has led the improvement work in this area, focusing on the safety of our schools and facilities. The team developed protocols to respond to student threats to self and to others, trained staff in threat assessment, updated protocols for suicide risk screening, and they continuously track calls for support. In addition, OUSD utilizes the Village Response Team as a safety tool across the district and has integrated it with Comprehensive School Safety Plans. As such, our emergency/crisis response at our schools improves every year.

Enhancing Overall Safety

George Floyd Resolution (GFR) Investments

Since 2021-22, the District has **increased** the GFR budget by **66%**.

- **Culture Keepers**
44 FTE → 66 FTE + Raises
- **Central Culture & Climate Ambassadors**
10 month → 12 month
- **Community School Managers**
30 additional FTE
- **Social Workers/Clinicians**
7 additional FTE
- **Restorative Justice**
25% Budget Increase
- **Professional Development**
5x previous investment
- **CBO Behavioral Health**
Expanded Contracts

We have made substantial progress in creating improved conditions for our young people in the spirit of the George Floyd Resolution thanks to a 66% increase in the GFR budget since 2021-22. Restorative practices, school culture shifts, and additional behavioral health supports are leading the way.





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Data Tells the Story

Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

We are currently on track to meet our goal of **1% point improvement**, with a current attendance increase of **1.6%**.

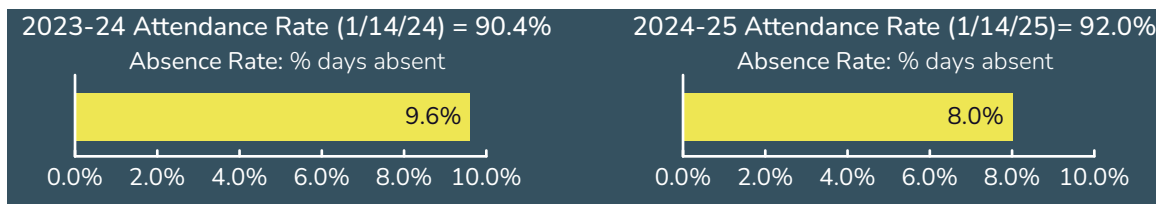
Put simply, students cannot learn if they are not in class. As absences increase - even in the early years of elementary school - the likelihood of a student performing at grade level decreases.

In OUSD, our vision outlines a goal of continuous improvement in the attendance rate year after year, specifically a 1% increase each year starting in 2024-25 and going through 2026-27.

Why is a change of 1% significant?

A 1% increase in attendance is crucial because even small improvements in student presence impact academic achievement, leading to better learning outcomes, increased graduation rates, and a positive ripple effect on overall school and community success.

Furthermore, even a slight improvement in attendance across the district yields increased revenue.



Conservative estimates indicate that OUSD would receive an additional **\$4.5M next year** for every 1% increase in attendance.

Fortunately we are on track to exceed our 1% improvement goal for the year. At the midway point of the 2024-25 school year, our attendance rate is 92%, compared to 90.4% at this same point in time last year, a 1.6% increase.

In addition, we set a goal for 100% of teachers to take attendance every day and we are very close to achieving that mark. Since the start of the current school year through mid January 2025, we have a district-wide attendance completion rate of 99.6%! A year ago at this time, we had a completion rate of approximately 97.5%.

Chronic Absenteeism

The Chronic Absenteeism rate captures the percentage of students who were absent for 10 percent or more of the instructional days they were enrolled to attend. This is due to absence for any reason—excused, unexcused absences and suspensions—and can have adverse impacts on students' learning to read by the third grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school.

In OUSD, we are working toward decreasing the chronic absenteeism rate by 3% each year from now through the end of the 2026-27 school year.

At the midway point of this school year, we have a chronic absenteeism rate of 24.2% compared to 31.9% at this point last year, an improvement of 7.7%.

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Data Tells the Story

Facilitating Joyful Learning Spaces



REACH students enjoying their transformed schoolyard

The built environment - including both indoor and outdoor spaces - has a significant impact on the health and well being of our school communities. Young people are designed to move and play throughout the day, and without safe and enticing areas on campus, their ability to do so is limited.

Thanks to the outstanding partnership of Eat. Learn. Play. foundation and KABOOM!, not only are we ensuring that our young people have access to greener, high quality spaces - in alignment with **Green Schoolyard Legislation (SB 1091)** - but that these spaces are inviting and joyful. Since 2021 and our first build at **Franklin Elementary**, we've now transformed 17 OUSD schoolyards together by adding new play structures designed by kids, gardens, nature exploration areas, outdoor classrooms, multi-sport courts, soccer fields, murals, and much more.

The most recent schoolyard builds took place at **REACH Academy** and on the Stonehurst campus, which serves **Esperanza Elementary** and **Korematsu Discovery Academy**.

The impact of these builds is far reaching and literally changing the landscape of our city, and the daily lives of our young people. According to The Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation,

- These quality play spaces now serve more than 6,600 students annually, with a goal of reaching 11,250 students annually over the next generation.
- 2,700 volunteers have donated over 22,000 hours to bring these spaces to life.
- By 2026, we aim to engage 6,000+ parents, school staff, and Bay Area volunteers.

Looking ahead, we are planning to remodel an additional eight schoolyards across the district by the end of 2026.





Creating Joyful Schools

Data Tells the Story

Equitable Access to Joyful Activities

The past 4 years have seen incremental growth in our **Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA)** programs at all levels providing a variety of art forms including dance, drama, media arts, music and visual art. Beginning this year, all elementary (TK-5) students will receive at least 50 minutes per week of arts instruction by a certificated teacher; this is something OUSD hasn't been able to say since 1988! Moreover, the OUSD VAPA office currently supports 25 schools in developing partnerships with community organizations, provides tailored professional development to elementary teachers on a weekly basis, secondary teachers on a monthly basis and offers new teacher support.



Dance instructor Heather Stockton leads kindergartners at Grass Valley Elementary in Oakland. Photo: Carlos Avila Gonzalez / The Chronicle



Thanks to the generous support of Salesforce, **Middle School Computer Science** has grown from something that was happening for a few students at two schools to a class offered at every middle school across the district. This year there are 1,774 students at 12 schools enrolled in Computer Science. Bringing the total number of students who have taken CS since the start of the Salesforce Grant in 2017 to 12,809. With continued support the course will expand to give students experiences with physical computing, robotics and a variety of programming languages in the coming years.

Launched in 2018, **Oakland Goes Outdoors** was created with the vision of having all OUSD students benefit from spending more time outside. We create more accessible and equitable opportunities for Oakland youth to experience quality time outdoors by providing inclusive, culturally informed, skills-building trips facilitated by OUSD educators and partners, both during and beyond the school day. During the 2023-24 school year, 5,566 OUSD students from 23 schools went on 221 trips thanks to Oakland Goes Outdoors.



Creating Joyful Schools

Data Tells the Story

In OUSD, **Expanded Learning Programs** currently serve 16,000 students, operating in all District schools every day of the week. Our programming provides students with safe and joyful spaces to spend time with their peers and learn new things. Students have access to a diverse array of activities—from cheerleading and judo to skateboarding and wrestling to the arts—providing ample opportunities for young people to be exposed to novel experiences and to discover new skills. In fact, our Expanded Learning Programs have received national recognition for outstanding offerings.



The Expanded Learning Program at each OUSD school site is very closely aligned with the climate and culture of the school itself, providing almost seamless continuous day support and nurturing for young people. For the past three years, Expanded Learning Programs have prioritized the creation of inclusive spaces and worked closely with local artists and community-based organizations such as YES! Sports to ensure students have the highest quality comprehensive programming possible. Teachers, coaches, and afterschool staff work together to assure the after-school opportunities are a good fit for the school community.

Through Expanded Learning Opportunities Program dollars, we've expanded access to free/low-cost after-school programs to all OUSD sites, including Burbank, Hintil, and Kaiser TK programs. This additional funding has also provided professional development opportunities for after-school staff to support students with disabilities better and ensure all students have access to safe and supportive programming. Family engagement is a priority for expanded learning programs, and each school hosts family events to engage

the community, which include winter celebrations, student art showcases, and student-led performances.

Our **Summer Learning** programs combine academic instruction with certificated district teachers along with engaging enrichment activities offered by our partner community organizations. We prioritize access to our most deserving students, including newcomers, students with disabilities, and those in need of academic support. Through summer learning, we support students with key grade transitions, including special bridge programs for students transitioning to Kindergarten, middle school and high school. We offer academic credit recovery opportunities for high school students, allowing them to graduate on time.

Since 2017, we have seen a 45% increase in enrollment. 9,055 students participated in Summer Learning programs in 2024. Please review our **impact report** to see the wide range of programs and the positive impact they have made on students, families, and staff.



Creating Joyful Schools

Spotlight on Schools

Marked Improvement at Horace Mann and West Oakland Middle

Great things are happening at **Horace Mann Elementary**. The school had a 2.2% increase in the attendance rate from this same point in the 2023-24 school year. This is a win in and of itself, but it comes on the heels of a 2.4% increase last year as compared to this same point in 2022-23. Principal Tammie Adams and the Horace Mann community have fueled this 4.6% attendance jump through positive culture, consistent data analysis, and professional development.

At **West Oakland Middle School (WOMS)**, the attendance team has implemented several unique and fun strategies to improve attendance, including:

- The GOAT (Greatest Overtime Attendance Team) accolade is given to the advisory with the highest attendance each week.
- A monthly Attendance Tier 2/3 Challenge where every 5 days, students who come to school receive an incentive and if they come to school for 15 days (which moves them up a tier), they are invited to a pizza party.
- Weekly attendance shoutouts where students with perfect attendance receive Phoenix bucks.

In addition, during Attendance Week, every student received a letter with their attendance rate and students had to write what barriers and challenges were getting in the way of their attendance. During advisory time, the attendance team and students shared ideas for overcoming challenges and barriers to attendance and students then reviewed the ideas with their families. These seemingly simple steps to improve accountability and communication among students, staff and families are vital for improving the culture of attendance.

And all of these strategies are paying off! Currently, **WOMS has decreased the chronic absenteeism rate significantly from 54.7% to 27.5% so far this year.**



"Star students" at Horace Mann Elementary

Creating Joyful Schools

Spotlight on Schools

The Fruits of the Cleveland Elementary School Garden

In 2019, the OUSD Board of Education passed a policy mandated the development of living schoolyards to reinforce the District's commitment to children's well-being, environmental resilience, community engagement, and equity. While schoolyard transformations are taking place across the city as mentioned above, our schools are taking initiative as well to provide customized garden-based learning opportunities for students on campus.

Perhaps nothing embodies a joyful space more than the excitement shared by students and staff alike when they gather together for an annual event that is unique to their school. That's what occurred in mid-December at Cleveland Elementary when 2nd and 3rd graders got to take part in the school's annual Salad Day. This is one of the days during the year on which the school community gets the most out of their celebrated school garden. During the year, students plant and tend to all kinds of vegetables including lettuce, radishes, celery, and carrots. On Salad Day, they harvest, then clean, then taste

all the vegetables, while also mixing salad dressing. Then each class gets to sample the salad they helped plant, grow, harvest, and mix. It's an important education for them, and in many cases, students get to eat vegetables they wouldn't normally eat, or have never even tried.

"Today is the big culmination. They've learned all those plant parts, they've learned how they work together to make the plants blossom and produce food," said Mary Schriener, Cleveland Eco-Literacy Teacher and Program Coordinator. "This is all about joy, it's all about joy, it's beautiful. Once we get the first couple rotations in, it just flows, the kids are just totally joyful, and that makes the adults very joyful."



Community Partner Impact

Our continued partnership with the **Oakland Lacrosse Club (OLC)** is responsible for introducing the exciting sport of lacrosse to students across the district.

- OLC has committed to providing staff for coaching and training in our Physical Education classes to promote the sport to both boys and girls
- OLC provides all equipment
- We currently have four middle schools fielding teams for both girls and boys lacrosse
- We anticipate three OUSD high schools fielding boys lacrosse teams this coming spring (Oakland High, Oakland Tech, and Skyline)



Creating Joyful Schools

Key Insights

Laying the Groundwork for Social Emotional Learning

Ensuring that students feel safe and supported at school needs to start from day one. That's why we have set the district-wide expectation that each class in OUSD begin with a morning meeting. This is scheduled time for students and the teacher to come together, check in and set the tone for the day.



