



Graduation rates are climbing. Students are earning better grades. Absenteeism and discipline problems are down. Teachers see higher engagement in learning—and young people are excited about their prospects for the future.

These gains are not happening by chance. Today, 80% of Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) students are participating in Linked Learning. Their education happens in pathways that connect them to local industry. The combination of rigorous academics, real-world work experiences, and personalized support helps each young person discover their purpose and ignite their passion for postsecondary success.

The transformation of Oakland high schools is happening through educator-employer partnerships, and with active community-wide support. Together, the community is making steady progress toward a powerful goal: 100% of Oakland public school students in Linked Learning.



“By allowing the students to shine to be something more than a statistic, you’re showing the world that we have potential. This program really changed my life.”

- Cathya Mendosa, Linked Learning student, OUSD graduate

Public Will

Residents decisively voted for Measure N in 2014. This parcel tax generates funds to make Linked Learning pathways to college and career available to students across the district.

In 2016, Oaklanders came together to “make a promise to every child in our city.” With leadership from Mayor Libby Schaff, the community created this Oakland Promise to offer resources, support, coaching, and incentives that children need from birth and throughout their school years to “empower them to seek out and thrive in the higher education and career of their choosing.” With equity as a focus, Oakland Promise works to give kids and their families, regardless of background, the opportunity to make this promise a reality—with an initial goal to triple the number of high school graduates who complete college in eight years.



“We experienced the state takeover of our district and the Great Recession... Linked Learning [pilots] were redefining equity in some schools in our district, we wanted to bring this transformation to scale, and we concocted the idea of a parcel tax to create the resources. People said we’d never get it passed, but we got 75% of the vote.”

- Dr. Gary Yee, Board Member, OUSD

Employer engagement

The career-themed pathways in Oakland USD draw on industries that fuel the regional economy: information technology, energy, engineering, design, entertainment, healthcare, and more.

Employers provide internships and other types of job-based experiences for high school students. Professionals established in their careers serve as supervisors, mentors, and role models for these young people, helping them discover career possibilities many could never imagine on their own, and gain the confidence to succeed in college and career. Local industry participants include Chevron, Kaiser Permanente, Pixar, Pandora, Intel, East Bay Municipal Utility District, PG&E, as well as county and municipal government agencies.

One strategic, large-scale collaboration is the Oakland Health Pathways Partnership. It involves two major public health institutions, Alameda Health System and the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, who engage more than 1,400 OUSD students each year through healthcare pathways. These young people are introduced to skilled jobs in a growing employment sector. They participate in hospital or clinical internships and other activities that spark interest and motivate many to pursue careers in healthcare, medical technology, or health sciences. As a result, the region’s expanding public health workforce will better reflect local demographics. The partnership is highlighted in this video and via a [series of briefs](#) generated through independent evaluation by SRI Education.



“Here in the East Bay we actually have a shortage of healthcare workers. We have an opportunity to work with our community to address disparities.”

- Delvecchio Finley, CEO, Alameda Health System