STUDENT VOICES: REACHING FOR WELLNESS

A STUDENT-LED EXPLORATION OF OAKLAND UNIFIED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

MAY 2022

To: OUSD Community Schools Student Services, OUSD Board of Education Directors, & Interested Parties

From: OUSD Action Research Interns

Re: A Student-Led Exploration of the Experiences of Oakland Unified High School Students

Date: May 2022

In the winter of 2022, Oakland Unified School District's Community Schools & Student Services (CSSS) Department engaged the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities (Gardner Center) to support us in an Action Research Internship. We each attend (or recently graduated from) Oakland High School or Rudsdale High School, and each of us has been part of a pathway: Law & Social Justice, Newcomer, Public Health, or Technology. All of us hope that our work during this Internship will benefit our community.

We developed a set of research questions that addressed CSSS's interests in Oakland students' experiences with health and wellness, so that the Department could draw upon our findings as they develop programming to better serve students. To CSSS's questions we added others that addressed aspects of the student experience we were interested in better understanding: academic success, inclusion and equity. We then created an interview protocol and conducted 20 interviews with other OUSD high schools and with each other, which we added to 32 responses from a written interview. We collected this data from February 9 through March 15, 2022. From these interviews we identified, coded, and synthesized the main points to create a set of findings from our research. Our research questions and findings are outlined below, along with our recommendations.

INTERVIEW POOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Interviewees were recruited in a number of different ways. School staff at three Oakland high schools distributed recruitment materials and encouraged students to participate. In addition, we reached out to peers to participate in the interview process. The only criterion was that the participants were currently enrolled at a high school in OUSD. Participant recruitment was challenging for live interviews (virtual or face-to-face), so we offered potential participants the option to respond to the interview questions in writing through a Google Form. We conducted interviews with 19 students who attended Oakland High School, 20 who attended McClymonds High School, six from Rudsdale High Schools, six from Sojourner Truth Independent Study Program, and one from Oakland Technical High School. Twenty of these interviews were live, and the rest were written.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS

We identified four research questions:
1. How can high schools and/or the district improve student health and wellness?
2. How can high schools and/or the district increase participation in health, mental health, and wellness programs, services, and activities?
3. What do students think are the barriers to academic achievement at OUSD high schools?
4. How do students feel about sense of belonging, inclusivity, and equity in OUSD schools?

We developed interview questions that would help to answer these research questions.

While we gathered and coded data as a full group, we worked in teams to develop findings for each research question. The following sections reflect our teams' interpretation of the findings, with input from the full group along with our Gardner Center facilitators and others who shared their reflections throughout the findings development process.

1. How can high schools and/or the district improve student health and wellness?
Findings by Joslyn Kearn, Nicole Kwan, and Vincent Ng

Health and Wellness Programs Offered

- When asked about health programs their school offers, more than half of the students mentioned physical health programs, such as reproductive health, sports physicals, and covid-related services and products.

- A majority of students mentioned wellness centers, such as the Shop 55 Wellness Center, as a resource for both physical and mental aid.

- Mental health services offered by interviewees' schools consisted of free counseling and therapy upon request.

- More than half of interviewees were aware of a career and college center on campus and included this resource in their response to our question about what health and wellness programs were offered at their schools.

Health and Wellness Programs Used

- When asked about the health and wellness programs utilized at school, most interviewees expressed that they had not used them, or that they sought support elsewhere with peers and other adults in their lives.

- Among those interviewees who had used a health or wellness program at school, wellness or health centers were the most frequently utilized by students. Health/wellness centers provided various physical and emotional services, and were well-known by the interviewees across the campuses.

- Among those who had used health and wellness programs, some of the more commonly mentioned services that were helpful included physical treatment such as sports physicals, nurses for minor injuries, reproductive health, and COVID-19 support (vaccines, testing, supplies/masks, etc.).

- Mental health services used by interviewees consisted of counselors and/or therapists, and were described by some as a helpful destressor that allowed them time to take a break and breathe.

Positive Perceptions of Health and Wellness Programs

- The most frequently mentioned programs or services that interviewees considered helpful were physical treatment such as sports physicals, nurses for minor injuries (ice pack, water, food as needed), COVID-19 vaccinations, and check-ups. However, interviewees felt that mental health resources such as therapy and counseling should be prioritized for the success of all students.

- When asked about positive perceptions of health and wellness programs, interviewees spoke about trusted adults in a wide range of contexts beyond what we may traditionally consider health and wellness programs (such as internships, career-building activities, etc.).

Negative Perceptions / Barriers to Accessing Health and Wellness Programs

- More than half of interviewees shared that they had not taken advantage of health or wellness services offered at school due to insufficient communication about where to access services on campus.

- For some students, being vulnerable with staff such as counselors, therapists, or even teachers is a difficult task due to a lack of trust in confidentiality. Some students shared that they are reluctant to ask for help because of the risk that what they communicate in services such as counseling will be brought back to their parents/guardians.

- Some interviewees spoke about a disconnect between students and staff. They described this gap in a number of different ways: a gap of diversity -- lack of representation in race/ethnicity of staff; insufficient quantity -- not enough supporting staff, many substitutes, no long term teachers; a superior attitude -- teachers who think their way MUST go; insufficient individualization -- teachers not individualizing each student's needs and way of learning, going at too fast or too slow a pace; and negative perceptions -- teachers or staff who cause students to feel belittled and uncomfortable.

Changes or New Programs Wanted

- A majority of interviewees answered that more academic and mental health programs would be beneficial. In particular they mentioned more frequent counseling and on-campus tutors.

- Interviewees also shared that building trusting relationships with staff is essential for students to feel comfortable in their school environment. Sculpting a sacred space is key to growing relationships with mutual respect.

- Even with the existence of health and wellness programs and services, students have trouble finding them due to an absence of adequate promotion and outreach. Effective promotion and outreach can address the stigma of asking for help, as well as reassure students that help is available with minimal effort. See below for related findings about outreach.

2. How can high schools and/or the district increase participation in health, mental health, and wellness programs, services, and activities?
Findings by Joslyn Kearn, Nicole Kwan, and Vincent Ng

How Students Usually Hear About Programs

- Among the interviewees, about half of them expressed that their schools mainly share information in a face-to-face manner. Most frequently mentioned were counselors, teachers, and other staff from various programs.

- Another common way OUSD schools shared information is via morning announcements, which were often perceived by interviewees to not be as effective as face-to-face communication. This can be caused by overlapping chatter, or a lack of attention paid to the intercom. About a quarter of the students expressed their view of announcements being unbeneficial.

Most Effective Outreach Methods Currently Used

- Among interviewees, the most effective outreach method was email, which was almost twice as commonly said as the next most effective method. Interviewees expressed that email provides them easy access to engaging programs, especially those emails that are more direct and easily readable and that catch the attention of recipients.

- Following the use of email, interviewees also expressed a preference for face-to-face interaction with adults as an effective way to engage them. This type of outreach was viewed by students to be extremely engaging, especially if it is with an adult they see often, like a teacher or a counselor.

- Students also expressed that social media is effective and frequently used.

- Interviewees shared that posters and flyers seen around the school, as well as physical handouts, were appealing and engaging.

Ideas for Better Outreach

- The majority of the interviewees expressed a need for more genuine communication, especially face-to-face guidance, as well as physical visual outreach methods on campus. This includes eye-catching flyers and bulletin boards to better visualize everything. When it comes to online methods of communication, interviewees emphasized outreach via email and social media as most effective due to their easy accessibility and the directness of each outreach method.

3. What do students think are the barriers to academic achievement at OUSD high schools?
Findings by Danny Hoang and Xinger Chen

Factors that Encourage Students Academically

- By far, interviewees identified teachers most often as the factor that encouraged their academic success. They found teachers who regularly checked-in with students to make sure they were on track were especially helpful in keeping students motivated. A few other interviewees highlighted the importance of supportive teachers who offered flexibility (extra time or extra support) on assignments or were available outside of class for additional guidance.

- A large majority of interviewees found themselves more inclined to perform well when they were surrounded with friends and peers who also had great academic performance.

- For many other interviewees, doing well academically meant investing into their own success in the future. This meant considering their own college eligibility and how that might affect their personal goals. While some students felt pride in their academic accomplishments and records, others noted that they were motivated academically by fear of shame and stigma around poor performance.

Factors that Discourage or Limit Students Academically

- Among interviewees who shared their views of what discourages them most academically, the majority of students felt a strong disconnect between them and their teachers and counselors. While the lack of engagement between teachers and students definitely was a common concern, some specified unequal engagement amongst teachers who displayed acts of favoritism towards specific students which leave other students less supported. Many students felt that teachers and school staff were not doing a very good job of supporting students, not providing flexibility to accommodate students' needs.

  Reflecting on this finding, the authors agree that teachers sometimes are not compassionate or sympathetic to the different difficult situations and issues in the lives of students. Many teachers often choose to disregard issues that students are dealing with, instead blaming them when they are unable to accomplish schoolwork or have problems in the classroom. This leads to a huge disconnect between students and teachers, leading students to feel less motivated and inclined to do schoolwork.

- Difficulties in completing schoolwork was another huge academic demotivator for many students. Amongst many of these students, the workload was described as excessive and difficult. This was further compounded as a demotivator by the lack of academic support they receive. Other students also felt that their assignments are both tedious and lacking in purpose.

- A frequent concern was that students had extracurricular, familial, or external responsibilities that would conflict with their academic responsibilities. Students described being put into a position where they needed to prioritize personal responsibilities over academics.

  Reflecting on this finding, the authors agree that external factors or responsibilities that affect students are not often recognized. The social determinants of health can dramatically impact students academically, though they are not acknowledged or respected by teachers or school staff. Every student has different living conditions at home that can influence academic performance, whether it be positive or negative. For example, many students may be suffering from a lack of proper nutrition or may not be able to get to school on time, due to living in an area with a lack of transportation.

Ideas for Better Supports

- Of the students who shared their thoughts about improving supports, many felt that teachers and school staff were inflexible and did not properly address student needs, and desired personalized assistance through meetings with attentive and caring teachers, counselors, and tutors. Specifically, students expressed the importance of having teachers address individual students and understand the pace of their learning to ensure no student is falling behind. Beyond personalized academic support, students shared a desire to build a connection that offers socioemotional support from the teachers and school staff.

- Some students spoke about the importance of individual check-ins with teachers as a way to build compassion and encouragement. They viewed check-ins as a way to provide a safe space for both parties to build understanding, encouragement, and confidence in students. For other interviewees, the support needs extended outside of school hours, and many interviewees expressed wants for tutoring programs and study groups.

4. How do students feel about their sense of belonging, inclusivity, and equity in OUSD schools?
Findings by Apple Reams Caldwell and Melanie Chavez Chun

School Capacity to Promote Student Sense of Belonging / Inclusion

- Among interviewees who shared their views about their schools' capacity to promote student sense of inclusion and belonging at school, the majority cited teachers and staff as the key factor. Approximately twice as many interviewees shared that adult at their schools supported students to feel included, most commonly by encouraging students to get involved in school groups, events, activities, and class time. These interviewees also noted that adults at school asking about their opinions was important. For example, as one intern shared, "During the planning of cultural events staff asked the students of that culture for their input and wanted to learn as much as they can so that the event will be culturally appropriate and accurate. I felt proud of my school. Not many schools would care enough to do cultural events like this and the fact that they tried their best to get the most input made me feel proud."

- Interviewees frequently tied the school's capacity to support students' sense of inclusion to school culture and attitudes. The vast majority shared a positive view of their school's culture. They described their schools' efforts to create a "culture of compassion" where students are engaged, do not feel alone, are not discriminated against, and are given a fair chance.

- Many interviewees described school activities as being inclusive, fun, and good opportunities to meet new people. School activities were described as varied enough to be inclusive of all students, allowing everyone to be part of the broader school community while at the same time being part of a smaller community of other people that

have similar interests or backgrounds. Some did point to language barriers, including times where instructions or promotional materials are only given in English.

When Students Feel Most Included at School

- Among interviewees who shared about their experience feeling included, the majority stated that they felt most included when there are school activities. For example, rally days really encourage students to participate and feel included. Some students felt included when they participated in sports or clubs. As one intern shared, "I always have fun at the rallies we have because the teachers are always encouraging me and my friends to participate in games. They also give us tickets when we participate so we can be entered in the raffle as an incentive."

- After school activities and the classroom is where interviewees said they felt the most included. Some stated that classroom activities can prioritize community building, for example taking academic days to learn about each other. Activities like these let students express themselves and learn about each other, regardless of their social identity. In addition, some interviewees shared that having classes with their friends, engaging in group discussions, exploring topics that interest them, going on field trips, and working on assignments that are fun, leads them to feel included.

- In addition to their sense of inclusion being built through participation in school activities and in classrooms, interviewees stated the importance of having friends in these settings. As one intern shared, "When I have friends in my classes it makes the environment less tense, and I feel like I can speak freely and be understood."

When Students Feel Most Excluded at School

- When asked when they feel most excluded at school, interviewees most often answered that they did not personally feel excluded. However, a significant number of interviewees described their perceptions of whether or not English Learners were excluded at school, with about an equal number weighing in on either side. As one intern shared, "In my experience when I first moved to the US I didn't really feel included in school activities because everyone spoke English and there were not that many teachers that spoke Spanish, so it was hard for me to understand what was going on."

- While many interviewees felt the classroom was a place where they felt most included, others felt the most excluded there, especially when the classwork is difficult or they aren't comfortable asking for help. Some interviewees also shared that they felt excluded in classes where they do not have friends. Some felt worried about getting wrong answers in a competitive environment.

Ideas for Improving Student Sense of Belonging / Inclusion

- Many interviewees said that they felt more sense of belonging or inclusion when there are more community social events, i.e., movie nights, field days, school sports games, clubs, celebrations, school dances, etc. These events give students a chance to let go of academic barriers or more traditional expectations, for example, students say that school-wide events encourage everyone to get out of their comfort zone, rather than sticking to their pathways.

- While most interviewees focused on improvements to events and activities, many shared ideas to improve connections between students and the adults at their school. Suggestions were geared primarily to teachers, who interviewees shared have an enormous impact on many students' sense of belonging. One interviewee shared that sometimes teachers give the impression that they view school as sort of a "getting it over with" kind of ordeal. Interviewees shared that teachers could build a sense of trust and comfort by talking to students more, to make them feel welcome to be part of a community, not a part of a classroom full of students. Some specific ideas for

teachers included opening classrooms at lunch to offer time and space for teachers and students to bond, while making students feel cared for, and talking to students to be sure they understand the coursework to make them feel that they belong in the class and school. Interviewees also identified an opportunity for teachers to prioritize community building through classrooms, in part by working to reduce competition centered around grades and by exposing students to nontraditional paths after high school.

School Capacity to Make Sure Students Have What They Need

- According to the majority of interviewees who talked about their school's capacity to make sure students have what they need, teachers and other caring adults were mentioned most frequently, with many more sharing positive experiences than negative. The teachers and counselors who do try to help do so because they want students to be academically successful. These adults support students to succeed in classes and ask them about their future, and help them get resources that they need, such as school supplies, academic support, technology, college and career guidance, and course offerings.

- The interviewees who shared negative experiences with adults talked about them not supporting students to reach their full potential, and this made students feel not included. Interviewees talked about teachers not understanding their responsibilities outside of school and this made them feel overwhelmed. Some interviewees felt as if their school is "inflexible" and not understanding.

- Also, some students felt like their school did a good job with providing supplies such as notebooks or Chromebooks that students need, but some felt their school didn't even supply the basics like pencils.

School Capacity to Account for Different Backgrounds

- There were a variety of responses to the school's capacity to account for different backgrounds, including a focus on culture and attitude. Many interviewees stated that culture is no longer important at school, but on the other hand, some schools prioritize culture. For example, one of the interviewees stated, "Culture is dead" but a different interviewee said, "School focuses on cultural backgrounds more than academics." This highlights the differences and individuality between each student and their perspective on cultural identity. There may be a negative or positive perspective on such a topic.

- Some students shared that when considering culture in schools and its ability to further a student's sense of inclusivity, students of all backgrounds should still be acknowledged and feel respected. The community high schools of the interviewees are majority Black and Latinx, and many students say that there is no discrimination to races, but culture is not cared for. For example, a student said that there are cultural clubs, but they are really only there to attract the ethnicity of those clubs, not to teach everyone about said culture. Students shared that schools also push for teaching students about the BLM movement, host events such as a Cambodian dance performance, and are overall open to all cultures. Yet many interviewees expressed their views that this was not enough, and that there is a lack of genuine interest.

- Interviewees noted that their schools have many staff who are multilingual and have different backgrounds, so they are more able to understand students' backgrounds. Furthermore, students shared that the multilingual staff are more prone to building strong relationships with the students, as they are making an effort to check in with them to talk. For example, one student had a teacher assign everyone to share likes and dislikes about themselves, while the teacher shared their hobbies and information about themselves, to get to know one another.

Language Barriers as Factor in School Equity

- On one hand, interviewees felt like their school didn't have enough accommodations for English learners. As one interviewee described, though their school publicly advocates to expand their community, they don't provide the language tools to support students from other places. On the other hand, a few interviewees shared that their school provided more curriculum choices and resources for English learners.

- Interviewees also shared their experience that most teachers who speak another language speak Spanish, rather than other languages.

Ideas for Improving School Equity

- A majority of the interviewees who responded said that there should be a lot of importance placed on developing caring relationships to boost students' confidence and comfort and ensuring that teachers speak the same language as students. Many also recommended the importance of one-on-one daily check-ins to provide more guidance and support to students.

- Interviewees suggested that there could be more improvements to get students what they need such as: study halls, school supply giveaways, providing more classes and programs, translators at school, and tutors. They also suggested that adults talk directly to students in order to understand their needs and to build a better relationship between students and staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations respond to these findings and our own experiences in school.

Health and Wellness Programming and Outreach

Programs and Services

Building Adults' Skills and Knowledge

- Provide adults at the school with a better understanding about what they can do to gain students' trust so that they are more comfortable communicating about health and wellness. School's wellness professionals should try to interact and build relationships with students just as other staff do. The college center staff walk around and give presentations and encourage students to join their weekly mail list where college info is given and there is a check in. This could be applied to wellness programs.

- Train teachers and staff about the mental health experiences of youth, so that they are well equipped to handle situations or circumstances where students feel vulnerable. This includes how and when adults can/should clearly communicate with students about what information they can hold confidentially, and under what circumstances they can/must disclose information that students share with parents or guardians. A course or training session regarding the mental health experiences of youth should be a requirement prior to teachers receiving their credential.

Access and Alignment

- Provide enough counseling and therapy to meet students' needs to ensure students can balance school and other interests and priorities. For example, among students who are participating in health and wellness services, conduct bi-weekly student feedback surveys to determine whether their needs are being fulfilled.

- Make participation as convenient as possible for students, i.e., zoom meetings, at school, after school. Some students have external circumstances that may conflict with participating in specific programs or services. The more flexible opportunities are, the more likely students are to benefit from them.

Expanding the Definition of Wellness/A Holistic View of Wellness

- Offer school community building days with a mental health component. Broadening discussions/programming about mental health to all students may help address stigma.

- Offer peer-to-peer mentoring. Implementing a peer-to-peer mentoring service would be helpful to students who have a strong desire to build trusting relationships prior to participating in health and wellness programs.

Prioritizing

- Prioritize additional physical health services for low-income students or students with circumstances who may have trouble seeking physical health aid. Prioritization can create a more equitable distribution of services. It would help to have a full list of resources, including eligibility requirements.

Outreach

Engaging Students in Outreach

- Provide a range of opportunities for students to engage in creating communication materials and outreach plans, including social media, about health and wellness services. Students communicate with one another better, since they have more understanding of other students.

Engaging Students in Program/Service Design

- Since students want to participate in programs designed with them in mind, engage them in cycles of program design and improvement, including incentives/compensation.

- Create surveys to ask what programs/changes to programs students want.

Recognizing Successful/Outstanding Programs

- Recognize successful/outstanding programs and work to ensure student awareness of these offerings and student experiences with them. For example, for programs and services that students perceive to be a safe space (e.g., Oakland High School's wellness center's sexual health counseling), uplift those practices.

<u>Using Preferred Communication Methods</u>

- In all communication and outreach about wellness resources, provide explicit instructions about how/where/who to contact to find more information about participating. Design communication materials with the goal of making it easier for students to find resources. Also provide multi-language instructions and contact information at the end of emails.

- Create opportunities for face-to-face, genuine promotion of programs with adults, destigmatizing the need for support. This could include hosting a wellness fair, where people who are involved in the field either as professionals or prior users of the program can engage in comfortable conversations with students.

- Provide one-on-one guidance about available services and where to find them. Personal connections are important to students when they are feeling vulnerable, so having guidance from a trusted adult is important. That said, teachers and staff need to be more informed on resources so that they can give good guidance to students.

- Continue/start using email as a form of communication, with clear, concise language, and engaging graphics. Keep it concise in order to engage students.

- Continue/start using physical promotion of programs to supplement announcements and digital promotion. Students who miss the announcements or want more information can be directed to a bulletin board that all students could drop by and gain access to open resources or information.

Academic Success

<u>Expanded academic support</u>

- Expand opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, including teacher's assistants who can provide support during and outside of class time. In some classes, there are teacher's assistants, which can serve as the tutor and an additional helping hand for students. This allows student teachers to find work opportunities, while offering students that extra person to help when they may need the extra support. They can be available during times where the teacher may not be. These teaching assistants could be students who have previously taken the course and excelled in it. Those students could be compensated through a stipend or credits or something else.

- Provide additional time during the school day for schoolwork. Have an optional chunk of time in the schedule designed so that students can work on their assignments. Students can choose to take a break during this time or work together in a designated location (library/theater/etc.). This could be similar to how some schools implement advisory but instead of requiring attendance, students are allowed to meet with students from different classes if needed.

- Expand tutoring opportunities with people who students feel comfortable with. For example, allow students to meet with their tutor to get to know them before tutoring. Working with trusted adults can make students feel comfortable when asking for help.

<u>Building Adults' Skills and Knowledge</u>

- Provide more learning opportunities for teachers to learn what students need. For example, how to understand students, what students need to learn, how to structure lessons, how to build community, how to create environments where students' strengths are acknowledged, and how to create genuine connection. Reflecting on

their own experiences, some interns recalled factors that hurt their academic motivation, sharing that if you are trying as hard as you can but not catching up and others are doing better than you, it's demotivating. When you have students feeling competitive academically, they lose focus on learning and doing their best and putting in the effort to grow. When you focus on grades and rank and doing better than someone else, you lose motivation. Teachers should be trained to address this kind of situation.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

- Create engaging, motivating classroom instruction such as activity-based learning. Some perceived lectures to be boring or assignments being all the same. On the other hand, in one intern's experience, they were given one or two lectures about a topic, and then required to develop a creative project about it. In another class, students were told to create their own prison system and present it. In an economics class, students were told to create a game that showcased the different economic trends or distribution of money. The intern has heard a large amount of positive student feedback amongst their peers about this way of learning.

Staff Hiring

- Hire teachers/staff that also have experience with kids and love doing their job/supporting children happily. Have a student committee to interview new hires and engage in more personal, interactive conversation to get to know future teachers.

Inclusion, Sense of Belonging, and Equity

Caring Adults

- Assessments of adults' performance should include evidence of their efforts to support a "culture of compassion." Students feel included when they are encouraged by their teachers to get involved in school activities and organizations; when adults at school solicit and value their view; and when teachers themselves are involved in school events. Students are discouraged when they themselves are mistreated or when they see other students mistreated by adults. In one case, an interviewee noted that many teachers are very harsh with non-English speaking students. They have seen teachers mistreat these students, with one teacher describing a Chinese speaking student as "horrible". These types of teacher engagement and behaviors should be considered during professional reviews of performance.

- Teachers should expand opportunities for student decision-making in all classes. Interns noted that classes such as leadership and yearbook give students a great deal of decision-making power, while also earning credits and building a sense of belonging. They would like to see this expanded into other types of classes.

- Adults at school should be supported to understand their students' lives and offer appropriate support and flexibility. Possible approaches include: frequent check-ins with teachers to build a caring relationship and boost their confidence; structured and recurring opportunities to provide feedback to adults; and assignments that allow students to share their identity (hobbies, likes/dislikes), learning styles, and needed accommodations.

Community Building

- Offer frequent school events and activities that reflect student input and cultural diversity, supporting students to build relationships with each other and a broader sense of school community. Creating events that celebrate

students' cultures with student input creates opportunities to build community and student sense of belonging. Examples include: food fair, field day, multicultural week, school Olympics.

- Prioritize hiring teachers and staff who reflect the communities and languages represented among students.

<u>Learning Resources</u>

- Schools should acknowledge and address the fact that not all students' learning needs are being met. From school supplies to translators to tutors, students note gaps in available learning resources. They need access to resources (backpacks, school supplies, technology, etc.) at the beginning of each school year, along with regular check-ins, since needs change throughout the year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MEET THE OUSD ACTION RESEARCH INTERNS

APPLE REAMS-CALDWELL
RUDSDALE HIGH SCHOOL

Hi, I'm Apple Reams Caldwell. I recently graduated from Rudsdale High School and I plan to start classes at Berkeley City College in the fall, where I will be majoring in Computer Science. I enjoy listening to and composing music. I want to pursue a career as a Computer Software Engineer. My reason for joining this internship was so that I can learn how to do professional research for big companies and to improve my complex problem-solving skills. The skills I developed during this internship will help me with the day-to-day tasks for my future career. I am thankful for the skills I have learned and I am grateful for having the opportunity to participate this year.

DANNY HOANG
OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Hello! My name is Danny Hoang, I am a senior at Oakland High School in the Public Health Academy. I strongly value education, and I believe that schools in Oakland can be improved to better serve students. With roots in Oakland, I truly love my community. My dream is to become a healthcare professional and give back to my community, working to serve all and assist them in any way possible. I feel that this program strongly aligns with my passions, interests, and goals, and will contribute to the growth of my character. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this internship and work alongside all of these wonderful and brilliant people.

MEET THE OUSD ACTION RESEARCH INTERNS

JOSLYN KEARN
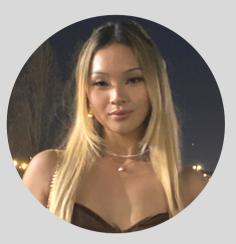### OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Hello everyone! I'm Joslyn Kearn, a Junior in the Public Health Academy at Oakland High School. I'd best describe myself as a crafter and people's person, as I enjoy building new relationships and crocheting in my free time. I was born and raised in Oakland, California, meaning I've spent my entire educational journey experiencing the various pits of OUSD. The exclusion of youth voice in major decisions regarding our quality of education has inspired me to take lead through the Action Research Internship. I believe that quality of education is linked to community health, and I aspire to apply my youth advocacy as a future pediatrician.

MELANIE CHAVEZ
RUDSDALE HIGH SCHOOL

My name is Melanie Chavez. I recently graduated from Rudsdale Newcomer High School and was part of the health pathway. The reason why I joined this internship is because I want to learn about the different perspectives of the community and their experiences at school. This internship will also help me understand more about the different situations that students are in. My goal is to be a Travel Nurse and help people in the community get what they need with the help of my bilingual skills. Growing up, it was really hard to get help when someone in my family was sick because we didn't speak English, and I want to help people in the same situation as I was once.

MEET THE OUSD ACTION RESEARCH INTERNS

NICOLE KWAN
OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL

My name is Nicole Kwan, and I'm currently a junior in the Public Health academy at Oakland High School. I decided to join this research internship because of my interest in youth advocacy and restorative action for my community. This internship gives me an opportunity to learn more about my peers, and create a change to better our community schools in Oakland. I have worked with other youth organizations within my community, but with this internship I get the chance to present to the district board and speak up for the rest of my peers. We believe that mental health and physical wellness is vital for a healthy education for students, and our goal is to further engage the students of community schools to a better education.

VINCENT NG
OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL

My name is Vincent Ng, and I'm currently a junior at Oakland High School in the Public Health Pathway. In my free time, I enjoy writing, playing the piano, going on runs, and advocating for my community. One of the reasons this internship caught my eye is their involvement in OUSD despite their location. I was eager to work with this team because I've been a student in OUSD ever since kindergarten when I immigrated. OUSD taught me how crucial education is by giving me that gift of education. Being from Oakland, I was eager to conduct funded, firsthand research on how the diverse Oakland population thinks about aspects of OUSD.

MEET THE OUSD ACTION RESEARCH INTERNS

XINGER CHEN
OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Hi! I'm Xinger Chen and I'm a senior at Oakland High's Law and Social Justice Academy. I've been involved with a few projects before in class, like the implementation of Ethnic Studies in OUSD. I think that it's very important that students and staff are both on the same page, especially regarding decisions that impact students. Understandably, it's difficult for students to be included in the decision-making process, but this is a perfect opportunity to work with students from other schools and represent the varying student experiences.