

the **LONG view**
SCREENING GUIDE



the LONGview screening guide

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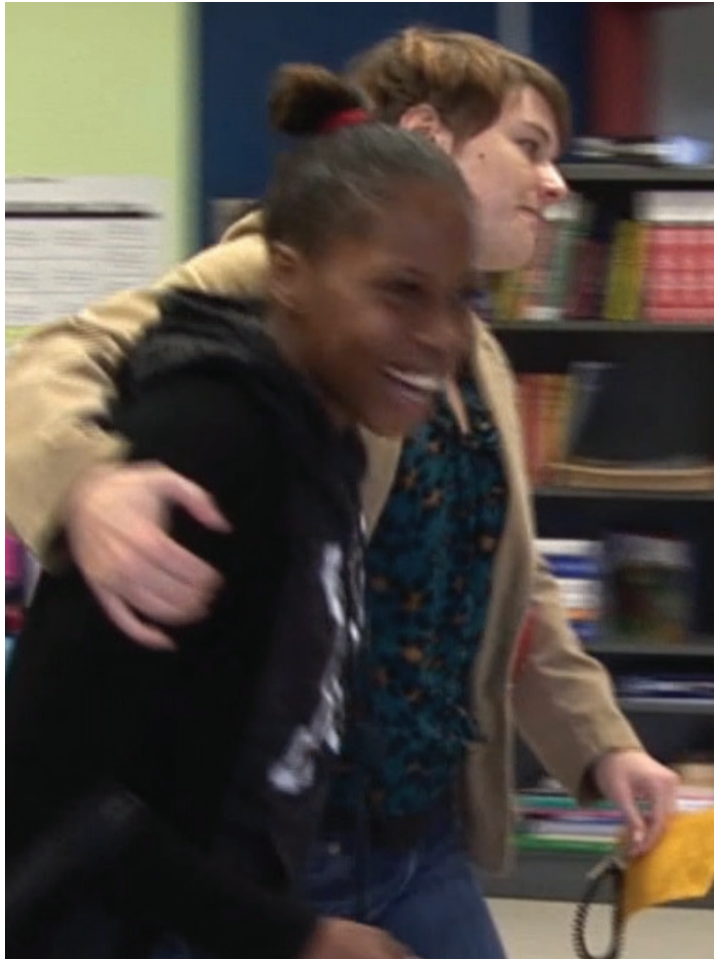
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A Note from Susan Zeig, Director of *The Long View*

One of the most common unifiers of people all over the world is the desire for a good education. Parents and guardians want this for the children in their lives, and young people want this for themselves as soon as they are old enough to appreciate its worth. Many countries, including Denmark, Finland, England, France, Australia, and Canada constitutionally guarantee the right to a free public education. In the U.S., however, the public education system too often perpetuates inequalities, based on race and class.

The Long View brings forward the work of community organizing, a process in which people come together over a shared interest to build collective power and influence change, as one of the most effective ways people without wealth can exercise power to improve their public schools—and sustain that improvement over time. There is a lot of media attention paid to what isn't working in public schools, but not enough to looking at what conditions create high-functioning public schools or the systemic factors that contribute to struggling schools.

The Long View provides a look at two public high schools in the same East Oakland neighborhood. One is a high-functioning school where educators, parents, community members, and administrators came together with a vision and have worked to sustain it; and another, where these conditions are not present. The film sets this story within the context of race and class, where residents in the more affluent—and predominantly white—Oakland hills have been able to control the circumstances of their children's education to a far greater degree than those without political and social power. Both communities care deeply about education. The differences are in circumstances and resources—not in desire. *The Long View*, however, is a story of hope. No one gives up in this film, and through this persistence we see a pathway towards positive change.

It has been inspiring for me to learn about and document how community organizing in public education is one of the most effective strategies to reduce inequality and broaden democracy. The vision, struggle, and perseverance of parents, students, educators, and organizers in *The Long View* and my previous film, *A Community Concern*, show the hope and the possibility for a more just public education system and society.

Films capture a moment and allow viewers to reflect on other peoples' experiences and their own situations—to see what is similar, what is different, and to explore a path forward. My hope is that in viewing *The Long View*—and in learning about the experience of parents, students, and educators in Oakland—you'll find inspiration and information to support your own local efforts for quality public education.



Introduction

The story in *The Long View* of one community's sustained effort to transform its schools is not unique to Oakland, California. Throughout the country, parents and students are partnering with educators to create and advance a shared vision for high-quality schools.

In Chicago, for example, families have been fighting against the closure of neighborhood schools. In Los Angeles, community members and partners are seeking to advance community schools—high-performing schools where families are welcome and supported and viewed as partners in students' and school success. And in New York City, parent organizations and their partners successfully organize on a range of issues, including the opening of new elementary and middle schools to ease overcrowding.

What each of these examples—and countless others throughout the country—share in common is a deep commitment to ensuring that communities are at the center of efforts to improve and sustain public schools. These students, parents, educators, and partners know instinctively what researchers at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform found after a multi-year study of Oakland Community Organizations (featured in the film)—that community organizing provides both the catalyst and the on-the-ground commitment to advance and sustain improvement.

The Long View offers a window into a decade worth of learning about the ebbs and flows of change in a community and district. The film shows the challenges and impacts of changing leadership and the power of educators, communities, family, and youth. It highlights the importance of deeper learning, real relationships, and full and fair funding.



Grassroots Organizing

Creating and Sustaining a Vision for Great Public Schools



The grassroots organizing of parents and students in Oakland and around the country provides a vital counterbalance to the destabilizing influence of disinvestment and privatization on school systems and communities. Through grassroots organizing, communities are putting forth an affirmative vision for their communities and their schools. And they're building power to shift local and state-level policy.



level improvement work, as shown in the film, as well as organizing at the district level to ensure students and families have an authentic voice in decision making.



In Oakland, the sustained organizing of Oakland Community Organizations (OCO) was the catalyst for a Small Schools' Movement in the early 2000's that spawned some of the city's highest performing schools today, including Life Academy High School, which is featured in *The Long View*. OCO's education organizing work continues today and includes both school-

Across the country, organizing is an essential tool for elevating the voices of low-income communities and communities of color in the conversation about public education. Nationally, the Journey for Justice Alliance is working to fight a common concern: the closure of neighborhood schools and the conversion of traditional public schools to charters, whose selective enrollment practices can result in limited access to local children. Through its We Choose campaign, Journey for Justice is organizing for what its parents and students demand: "world class public schools within walking distance of their homes."

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Both Journey for Justice and the Alliance to Reclaim our Schools (AROS), a coalition of national grassroots groups, student-led alliances, and the national teachers' unions, have identified community schools as an alternative to school closure and charter conversions. Community schools are designed from the ground up to meet the needs and leverage the assets of the communities in which they're located. They're neighborhood hubs where students are supported and where parents and school staff partner to create



and implement a vision for student and school success. According to the Learning Policy Institute, comprehensive community schools share four interconnected features: expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities; collaborative leadership and practice, family and community engagement; and integrated student supports, such as medical and mental health services for student and English language classes for parents.



In Los Angeles, Reclaim Our Schools, a coalition of community organizations, United Teachers Los Angeles, and advocacy partners, was successful in advancing a community school resolution in 2017. In New York City, community groups have been instrumental in an effort to expand community schools throughout the district. And in Austin, Texas, Austin Voices for Education and Youth organized for community schools as an alternative to school closure—a strategy that has since expanded to schools throughout the district.

Elsewhere, grassroots groups are organizing to stop punitive discipline policies, strengthen relationships between teachers, students, and families, advance fair school funding, and more. They're also partnering with districts and holding them accountable to providing every student, especially those furthest from opportunity, the resources, supports, and services to thrive.



As Dr. Pedro Noguera, Distinguished Professor of Education at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA and founder of the Center for the Transformation of Schools, says in *The Long View*, “The most important thing we have to learn is that the community can’t just leave decision-making up to the board and to the superintendent. The public’s role is critical, and in order for the public to be heard, the public has to be organized.”

Emma Paulino

A Warrior for Education Justice



In 1996, Emma Paulino was a recent immigrant, from Guadalajara, Mexico to the United States, struggling to understand why her son, MacEdward, a third grader in Oakland, was still not able to read. She didn't understand the complexities of the school system and—like many parents—blamed herself and even MacEdward for his challenges. And then she was introduced to an organizer with Oakland Community Organizations (OCO). In trainings with OCO she learned that throughout the “flatlands” of East Oakland, thousands of children were attending overcrowded, under-resourced, and dysfunctional schools. She realized that it wasn't her son who was failing. It was the system that was failing her son.

Emma recalls seeing a map of Oakland schools created by the organizers that showed the disparities in school size and ranking on the state's Academic Performance Index (based on test scores) between schools in the flatlands and those in the more affluent hills. “I never thought that there was something wrong

with the school,” recalls Emma. “That's really painful for a mother to somehow put the problem on my son. So that was really an eye opener for me when I saw the map. I knew they were failing all the kids in the flatlands...I began to understand it was an equity issue.”

Fast forward to 2018 and Emma is a veteran community organizer with OCO, working with predominantly immigrant parents in the same neighborhoods of East Oakland. For the past seven years, much of Emma's education organizing work (she also organizes for immigrant rights) has been with parents and students at Fremont High School, one of the two schools profiled in *The Long View*. The organizing efforts have included visiting high-performance schools, working with teachers and school leaders to build trust and advance a shared vision, and—like Emma two decades earlier—analyzing school and district data.



“Parents who have been involved understand the data,” says Emma. “They know what questions to ask.” The challenge, she adds, is being able to ask teachers and school leaders about the data without them feeling attacked. “Unfortunately, for schools like Fremont, there have been times when they feel like they are the target because they are a low-performing

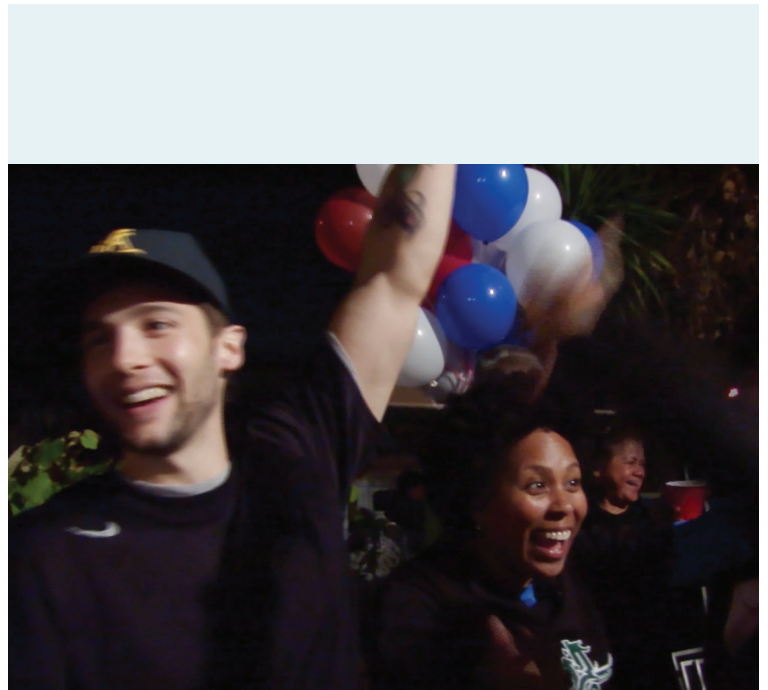
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school. Every time the data comes out, it feels like an attack,” says Emma. She adds that parents recognize that there are many factors that contribute to school performance, including the level and type of support the school gets from the district.

Decades of scrutiny, without consistent support and capacity building, have frayed relationships and eroded trust—between Fremont parents and the district, between school staff and the district, and between school staff and parents. That’s a tough environment in which to organize and try to advance a shared vision. That’s why Emma and her Fremont parent leaders are returning to OCO’s education organizing roots—beginning in the Fall of 2018, they will begin working through neighborhood congregations. The shift, says Emma, creates the opportunity to bring other voices from the community into the work.

Another opportunity is to resume a practice that was instrumental in Emma’s development as a parent leader: site visits to high-performing schools in similar neighborhoods and serving similar students. But in 2018, OCO leaders don’t need to travel across the country to see

models, as was the case when Emma was a parent leader. They only have to go across town, to the thriving schools that grew out of the Small Schools’ Movement that OCO led nearly 20 years ago. “Those schools are in our own neighborhood,” says Emma. They are proof, she adds, that despite the setbacks and frustrations, change is possible.



Watch the Film

▶ Hope For the Future

Two Decades of Organizing: For 22 years, Emma Paulino has been organizing for education justice in Oakland.

Discussion Questions

What does it mean for parent leaders to work with an organizer who has experienced the same struggles they're experiencing?



Understanding school and district data has been empowering for parents. But, as Emma notes, it can trigger questions and concerns and also create tension with school and district staff. How can school data be used to inform conversations and identify needs, rather than as a way of shaming or punishing schools?

▶ OCO Action

OCO's education organizing has spanned several decades in Oakland. This archival footage shows a 1999 organizing meeting at St Elizabeth's Parish, where OCO began in the early 1970s.



Discussion Questions

In Oakland and around the country, grassroots organizing has been a catalyst for positive change in schools. What's the power of community organizing? How would an organizing effort advance equity in your local schools?

▶ Visiting Life Academy

Fremont High School parents visit Life Academy to deepen their understanding of what it takes to create a strong and vibrant school.

Discussion Questions

What would it mean for parents, students, and educators in your community to visit high-performing schools? What emotions might it elicit? How would the experience help to advance a shared vision for strong, community-engaged schools in your neighborhood?



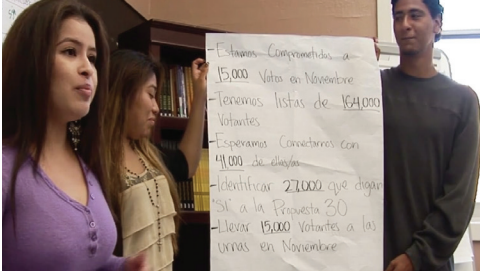
School visits at times can be difficult for parents, who might blame themselves for not knowing that the schools are of uneven quality or for assuming that school leaders always know best. How can community groups be prepared to support the varied responses of parents to what they learn and see on school site visits?

Watch the Film

▶ Passing Proposition 30

OCO parent and student leaders were part of the coalition that was instrumental in passing Proposition 30, a tax on upper-income earners in California that brought much-needed funding to public schools.

Discussion Questions



OCO's work on Proposition 30 helped the organization build a new kind of power in Oakland. How would voter engagement work build your organization's power and influence?

What would help you to build civic engagement capacity in your community?

Learn More

National Grassroots Organizing Networks and Coalitions

Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (<http://www.reclaimourschools.org/>)

Center for Popular Democracy (<https://populardemocracy.org/>)

Faith in Action (www.faithinaction.org)

Institute for Democratic Education in America (<http://www.democraticeducation.org/>)

Journey for Justice (<https://www.j4jalliance.com/>)

Community Schools

Children's Aid National Center for Community Schools (www.nccs.org)

Coalition for Community Schools (<http://www.communityschools.org>)

Communities in Schools (<https://www.communitiesinschools.org/>)

Fostering Youth Voice and Leadership



In *The Long View*, we meet high school students Robert Paige and Carmen Rivera as they are introduced to organizing through Oakland Community Organizations (OCO). Carmen interns with OCO as part of her senior project at Life Academy. She leads a rally against gun violence and joins in efforts to secure a stronger voice for parents and students in school site decisions. Robert, for his part, immerses himself in OCO's education organizing and voter engagement work; he leads trainings, meets with local officials, and becomes part of the voter outreach effort to pass a ballot initiative to increase funding for schools.

and addressing systemic injustices that they experience in their lives. Through trainings and research, they deepened their understanding of the causes and consequences of racial inequities in the schools and the pervasiveness of gun violence in low-income communities and communities of color. And they joined with others in collective action.

"I want my parents and all of our parents to be educated about what is going on," Carmen says in the film during a community meeting. "Why is more money going to jails when they could go to schools, books, everything - we need computers. We just want our opinion to be heard and our parents' opinions to be heard also."



For both Carmen and Robert, organizing provides a structure for understanding

Experiences like those of Carmen and Robert are changing the trajectory of youth lives, according to research from the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO). In its February 2018 report, "Transforming Young People and Communities: New Findings on the Impacts of Youth Organizing," FCYO documents the rise of youth organizing and details its impact, particularly on the lives and opportunities of young people of color. In their scan and analysis of youth organizing around the country, report authors identified 300 youth organizing

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groups in 38 states. That's up considerably from the 180 groups identified in 2013. The benefits of youth organizing are extensive, according to the FCYO study, including contributing to the social-emotional and academic development of young people, and fostering engagement in civic and community affairs. Organizing also increases young people's sense of agency through the development of structural analyses of the problems they're facing in their personal lives, including the impact of multiple, interlocking systems of oppression across race, class, gender, and immigration status.



Write the report authors, “Organizing provides a vehicle through which young people can understand their life experiences within a broader social, historical, and political context, while developing skills that equip them with convictions and agency to change structural forces that contribute to their circumstances.”

Saa'un Bell, Strategy Director for Californians for Justice (CFJ), a youth organizing network in California, has seen this impact first hand during her eight years with the network. “Young people say that CFJ is a place where, regardless of who you are, you feel welcome and safe. Where you belong. And where you can work towards building your own personal leadership, your purpose in life. That's very difficult to figure out at school.”

And, because organizers and staff are often people of color, they provide young people with important role models. “When young folks see a diverse array of folks of color doing things, speaking in a particular way, holding themselves in a particular way, they aspire to be and do those things,” says Bell.

Training young people to be organizers means training them with critical life skills, she adds. “You don't have to be a professional organizer to be an organizer in your community,” says Bell. “Whether they aspire to be a doctor, a lawyer, or an administrator, organizing is about helping young people understand how they can contribute civically and supporting them to advance racial justice.”

Increasingly, organizations focused on youth organizing are also connecting young people to needed services and supports, either by providing services directly or by forming partnerships with providers. Academic and mental health services are two of the most common supports provided. Other frequently provided services include employment assistance and physical health services.

Looking back on his own experiences, Robert recognizes the importance of mental health services, particularly for youth who are confronted with trauma-inducing challenges in their lives. “I realized when I was incarcerated that I never had the opportunity to talk about the traumas I faced,” he reflects.

As he has transitioned to a new role of organizer with Californians for Justice, working with high school students in Oakland, Robert brings his own experiences into the youth organizing space. “We provide a space to talk about traumas and what we're going through in our lives. I try to keep it real, connect it to the institutional racism students are experiencing, and share my own story. It's not going to fix everything, but it gives students a space to begin to unpack what's going on in their lives.”



Q&A: Robert Paige

Robert Paige was introduced to organizing as a high school student. Today, he's a professional organizer with Californians for Justice, a statewide youth organizing network, working with students at Fremont High School. In this interview, he reflects on his experience as a youth leader and his transition to the role of organizer.

Q How did you get involved in organizing and what made you return to it as a professional organizer?

A As a youth, I was looking for direction and I happened upon organizing. What made me stick around is actually seeing the collective power and leadership that builds out of organizing. I came back into organizing because of how I was impacted by the work and also because of what was lacking in my own experience. I wanted to have a personal hand in making sure that the youth I work with are prepared and ready for whatever life challenges they face.

Q How do your personal experiences inform your work with high school students?

A I try to be real with the students that I work with. I make sure they know that the organizing process isn't easy and that things may not actually change. And if things do change, they'll still have different forms of oppression and racism that they're going to face. But through the organizing, they'll have the tools and the understanding to address challenges. It was important for me, when I was young, to have someone rooted in where I came from to ground me in the organizing work. That's one of the things that I try to incorporate into my work. I try to be fully present for the students and I share stories from my life—what worked and what didn't work. It provides context for the students and lets them know we all struggle and there's nothing to feel ashamed about. There's power in sharing my story because it allows other folks to do the same.

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Q You've started organizing at Fremont High School, which is featured in the film. What does that work look like?

A A group of 8-12 students meet every week. We conduct short training workshops to help students understand such issues as budgets and their rights on the school site council. One of the biggest pieces of our work together is building relationships. That's the thing that sustains us all—the relationships we have with each other, and how we move through the work. We had a big “win” recently. Beginning in April 2018, students will be on the teacher hiring committee. It will be one of the first introductions that a new teacher has to the campus, so off the bat they have an idea that the school operates differently and is centered around students being involved. I think it will be a good thing for the students and the teachers.

“There’s power in sharing my story because it allows other folks to do the same.”



Watch the Film

▶ Peace March

Life Academy students take their learning and values to the streets, organizing a march and rally to stop gun violence in Oakland.

Discussion Questions

In the clip, Life Academy Teacher Pablo Venturino talks about “meaningful action,” and helping students understand how “academic skills can be used to change their realities.” How would this philosophy of teaching and learning impact student engagement and build their leadership skills?



Life Academy Principal Preston Thomas notes that despite losing two students to gun violence, the school posted the largest academic gains in the district. How can schools create a supportive and safe school community for students, especially those experiencing insecurity and trauma?

▶ Reflection

After returning home to Oakland, Robert Paige reflects on his incarceration.

Discussion Questions

Robert talks of being “low and broke” and without support after high school.



What can schools and communities do to better prepare young people for the challenges they face after high school?

Robert chose to become a youth organizer when he returned to Oakland. How could youth organizing be a catalyst for leadership and change among young people in your community?

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Learn More

Alliance for Educational Justice (<https://www.facebook.com/4EdJustice>)

Californians for Justice (www.caljustice.org)

Community Coalition (cocosouthla.org)

Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing (www.fyco.org)

InnerCity Struggle (www.innercitystruggle.org)

Make the Road New York (www.maketheroad.org)

Urban Youth Collaborative (www.urbanyouthcollaborative.org)

Youth Justice Coalition (www.youth4justice.org)



Making Learning Meaningful



When Carmen Rivera stood before a panel of teachers and community members to present the findings of her year-long senior research project, she was doing much more than completing a graduation requirement. The Oakland, California senior was offering solutions to the proliferation of gun violence, which she and her classmates had already experienced in their young lives. Earlier that year, a close friend and classmate at Life Academy High School had been shot and killed, one of 3 young people associated with the school who lost their lives as a result of gun violence in a single school year.



For Carmen and her classmates at Life Academy, the senior defense (also known in Oakland as the Senior Capstone Project) is the culmination of their four years of learning at the small East Oakland public high school. Interdisciplinary projects and hands-on learning that's grounded in the lives and interests of students are common at Life Academy, where teachers understand that student engagement is key to deep and powerful learning.

In *The Long View*, Life Academy teacher Pablo Venturino explains it this way: "One of our main principles is meaningful action. So everything that we do has to have a positive impact on our communities and our lives. And that is how our students get familiar with this idea that academic skills are useful to change their realities."

Preston Thomas, the former principal of Life Academy and now the district's High School Network Superintendent and Executive Director of College and Career Readiness, was a pioneer of the Senior Defense when he was a classroom

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teacher at Life Academy. In the spring, when his students were getting ready for their final presentations, Thomas recalls his colleagues—who had not incorporated Senior Defenses into their classes—being frustrated because the process consumed so much of the students’ time and interest. “The teachers were like, ‘Why can’t I get him to do that in my class?’” recalls Thomas. Over time, as teachers saw the impact of the projects on student engagement and learning, the Senior Defense became a school-wide initiative.



“A performance-based environment engages students as adolescents, where they’re at,” says Thomas. “They want to show you that they’re smart. They want to perform. They want to show you that they’ve mastered something, and they take a lot of pride in it.”

The Senior Defense is just one example of ways in which schools across the country are embracing projects, often defined by the students themselves, as a strategy for both making learning meaningful and helping students build critical 21st Century skills, like analyzing research, developing persuasive arguments based on evidence, and being able to communicate their findings in clear and compelling ways.

Gone are standardized tests as the only gauge of what students know and are able to do. Instead, schools are using what are known as performance

assessments, like the Senior Defense, that require students to demonstrate their knowledge and competencies, much like a musician demonstrates her skills through a recital or an artist through a painting.

Internships, which build connections between academics and real-world tasks and jobs are another way schools are making learning meaningful and creating spaces for students to apply their new skills and knowledge. In schools that are part of The Big Picture—Learning Reimagined Network, for example, students work in internships in nonprofits or local businesses two days each week. Like Life Academy, Big Picture Schools serve a high percentage of students’ whose first language isn’t English or who come from low-income families—

“A performance-based environment engages students as adolescents, where they’re at...they want to show you that they’ve mastered something, and they take a lot of pride in it.”

students who are often the furthest from opportunity. They both boast high graduation and college acceptance rates. In fact, Life Academy and Met West, Oakland’s Big Picture School, which also grew out of the district’s community-led Small Schools Movement, are two of the highest performing schools in the district.

As Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, president and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute, notes in the film, high expectations, challenging curriculum, and comprehensive supports all contribute to Life Academy’s success. “Because of the frame which says, ‘nobody is going to get tracked into different kinds of curriculum; everyone here is expected to succeed; and we are going to support you to do it,’ most of the students do go on into good careers and college.”



Q&A: Preston Thomas

Q What conditions need to be in place in schools in order to have the kind of rich curriculum and instruction that we see at Life Academy?

A First, it has to be grounded in grade-level standards in order to make sure students are ready for college. Too often, this gets missed and then you get a low-quality product that doesn't push students. You also need to create spaces, patterns, and systems in schools where teachers are collaborating with each other on a regular basis. That means making sure there's time in the schedule for collaboration and planning and then guiding this process and giving it time and space to develop.

Q What's special about the Senior Defense at Life Academy?

A The Senior Defense engages students as adolescents, where they're at. You see it when they come out of their defenses and they meet each other in the hallway. They're starting to hold a collective accountability to one another. They're like, "How did you do?" "Oh, you didn't do well." "Okay, I'll jump in and I'll help you." "How are we going to do this?" "You have to do it again." And you know, that type of work is what real life is like—it's like most of the things I do in my job. That real-world aspect and working with adolescents to motivate them are both very powerful.

Watch the Film

▶ Senior Defense

Every senior at Life Academy is responsible for completing an in-depth study of a topic of their choosing and then presenting their findings before a panel of teachers, peers, and community members.

Discussion Questions

How does the Senior Defense compare to the teaching and learning in your local high school?



How would project-based lessons, like the Senior Defense, engage and prepare students in your school or district?

The Senior Defense provides an opportunity for students like Carmen Rivera to explore critical issues in their community, such as gun violence or lack of available health care. How might your school create opportunities for students to connect learning to community issues and concerns?

Watch the Film

▶ Biology Class

The biology and English teachers at Life Academy worked together to design a joint lesson on genetic testing, creating a character and storyline that connects the course work in both classes. “It just adds a whole different energy to the classroom if you can come up with really engaging and interactive curriculum,” says biology teacher Claire Crossett.

Discussion Questions

What do you notice about the students in Claire Crossett’s class?
How does their engagement compare to the engagement of students you know?



Students in Claire Crossett’s class work in teams to conduct and analyze the genetic testing. What are the benefits of team-based lessons? What are the challenges?

Life Academy’s biology lab makes hands-on learning possible for its students, but not all schools have access to these state-of-the-art tools. Do all students and teachers in your district have access to the science labs and supporting materials?

Learn More

Big Picture Learning-Education Reimagined

(<https://education-reimagined.org/pioneers/big-picture-learning/>)

The California Performance Assessment Collaborative

(<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/project/california-performance-assessment-collaborative>)

College Access: Research & Action (<http://caranyc.org/>)

Deeper Learning for All, Alliance for Excellent Education (<http://deeperlearning4all.org/>)

Internationals Network of Public Schools (<http://internationalsnps.org/>)

New York Performance Standards Consortium (<http://www.performanceassessment.org/>)

Performance Assessment of Competency Education

(www.education.nh.gov/assessment-systems/pace.htm)

Urban Academy Laboratory High School

(<http://www.urbanacademy.org/bholjvbj4dvu7c0io5tw38bqsl7h4p>)

Want Great Schools? Invest in Teachers

As the stories of Fremont and Life Academy high schools unfold in *The Long View*, we see two very different approaches to teacher leadership and support. At Fremont High, we are introduced to teacher leaders who wind up feeling undermined and frustrated at the top-down changes they and their students are experiencing. In contrast, at Life Academy, we see teachers who are central to creating and sustaining a vision, including adding a middle school to better serve their students. Those differences—in Oakland and in districts around the country—have a powerful impact on teacher satisfaction, effectiveness, and, ultimately, on their willingness to

effectiveness. These practices also reduce teacher turnover, which undermines student achievement and is costly to schools and districts. Research shows, for example, that, on average, it can cost an urban school district more than \$20,000 to replace a single teacher.

In Oakland and elsewhere, investing in and cultivating teacher leadership can be vital to teacher retention and student success. At Life Academy, for example, teachers recognized that much of the ninth grade English and math classes were focused on building skills that students should have mastered in middle school. Although they reworked the curriculum to



continue teaching in a school or district. “It’s important for district leaders to think about the way that investment will produce a more effective long-term set of successes for students by getting and keeping teachers, and investing in their capabilities as they become seasoned professionals,” says Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond in the film.

Studies show that investing in teachers—through strong preparation and then in schools with collaborative and supportive leaders and good working conditions—increases teacher satisfaction and

address the needs of incoming students, the teachers were frustrated knowing their ninth graders were starting out behind. The addition of a middle school has changed this dynamic. Today, the vast majority of students transition to ninth grade without needing remediation. These changes wouldn’t have been possible without the leadership of Life Academy teachers.

Teachers there are also integrally involved in shaping professional development opportunities at Life Academy. In a partnership that began with the Humanities Department and has expanded to the

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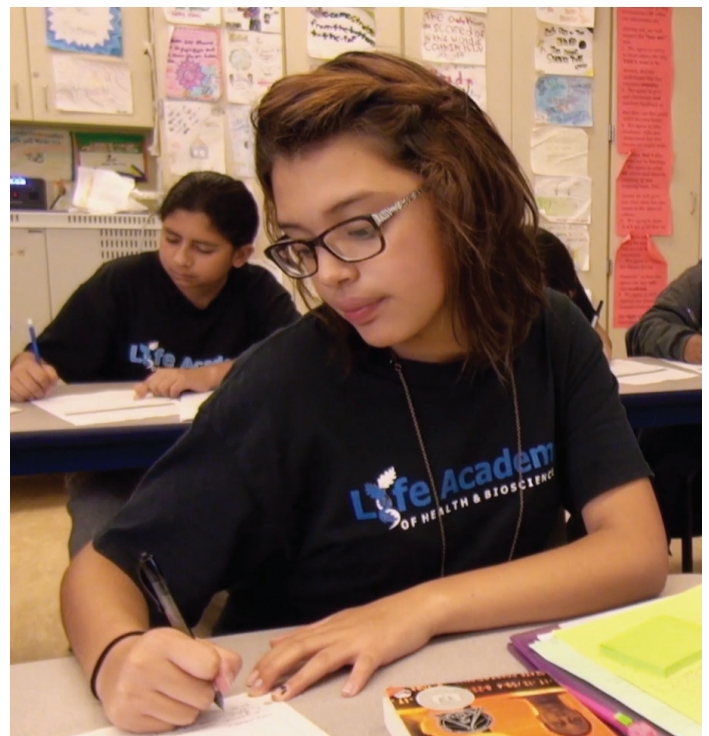
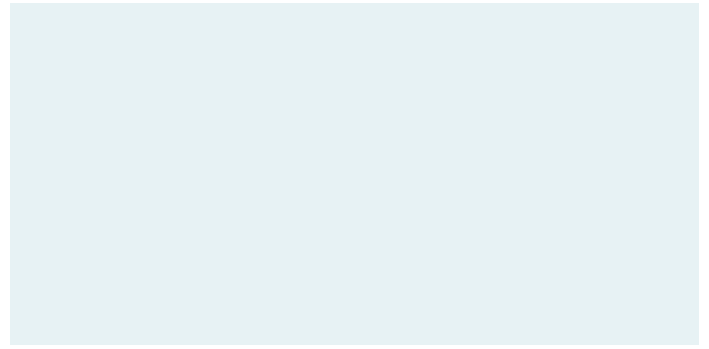
whole staff, Life Academy has teamed up with the nearby Mills College Teachers Scholars Program, which runs what are



called “inquiry cycles” in which teachers examine their classroom curriculum and instruction and, with the help and support of colleagues, improve their practice.

Even with these investments, Life Academy still struggles to retain a strong cohort of experienced teachers—a district-wide challenge. In addition to the impact of school-level conditions on teacher retention, in Oakland the high cost of housing also contributes to turnover. Among high schools, however, Life Academy has one of the highest “average return rates.”

Sustained improvement for students won't happen without sustained attention and supports for teachers, says Dr. Darling-Hammond in the film. “At the root of it, you can't actually control your way to great teaching. You have to invest in the people who are doing it, and then trust them to use the knowledge and skills you have given them.”



“ At the root of it, you can't actually control your way to great teaching. You have to invest in the people who are doing it, and then trust them to use the knowledge and skills you have given them. ”



Q&A: Eva Oliver

Eva Oliver is a founding teacher of the Life Academy middle school. In this interview, Eva reflects on the systems and practices at Life Academy that support teachers and encourage their leadership. She also shares what school districts can do to keep teachers healthy and effective for their students.

Q Your entire teaching career has been at Life Academy. What are the supports and opportunities that keep you coming back year after year?

A Part of the reason I am still at Life Academy is the kids. In my nearly eight years at Life Academy I have taught entire families and that is part of what makes me want to stay—the families and the opportunity to build long-term relationships with the community and to build trust with parents. That is one thing that is cool about having a 6-12 school.

Institutionally, we have a lot of autonomy in our classrooms and at grade level. Life Academy is a highly intellectual, professionalizing place. Three-quarters of our staff have master's degrees. A lot of us find that very stimulating. There's always something to learn and opportunities to grow. We also get to teach what our students want to learn about and what we are passionate about, which means we can create relevant curriculum for our students. This is also very professionalizing.

Our new administrator, Aryn Salazar-Bowman, is an extremely humanizing principal and she does a really good job of taking care of teachers and making us feel seen, which expands our capacity to take care of our students. This year, we also have a very active union rep who is really keeping us informed and encouraging us to leave by 5 p.m. one day a week. When we have work-life balance we are better for our students.

Section 4

Q What can districts do to better support teachers?

A A teacher's job is to take care of the students. That's what we're hired to do and that's what we want to do. That's why we are teachers. The farther you get away from school, such as policymakers at the district, state, or even at the national level, everyone talks about the kids, but the disconnect is no one is talking about the teachers. If we are well compensated, if we can afford to live in the area we are teaching in, if we feel seen and valued, we will do our job. When I get frustrated as a teacher is when I feel like other people are trying to take care of the students in my room, when I have that. I need someone to have my back.

For example, if there were more allocation of funding to promote teacher wellness, we would be better teachers because we would have more capacity to do our jobs. We have lost students at Life Academy to gun violence and teachers go through struggles themselves and we don't have easy access to therapy. Secondary trauma and secondary PTSD is something that teachers really live with. We hold the stories of our students. That is heavy and so I don't understand why it is so hard to get affordable access to counseling. That is something that districts could provide that would help teachers.



“ Life Academy is a highly intellectual, professionalizing place...there's always something to learn and opportunities to grow.

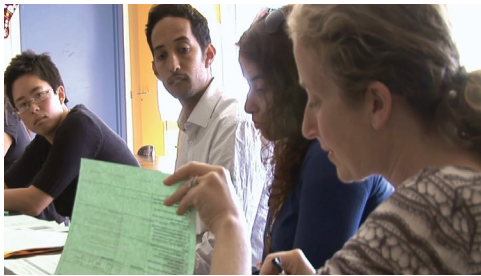
”

Watch the Film

▶ Supporting Teachers

In Oakland and around the country, investing in teachers is critical to student success.

Discussion Questions



Life Academy teacher Suneal Kolluri talks about the difficulty keeping experienced teachers. Is teacher retention a problem in your school or district? What are the factors that might contribute to high teacher turnover?

How does your school or district support teachers? What are the opportunities for professional development and leadership?

▶ Middle School Writing Class

Opening a middle school at Life Academy has been key to students entering high school with the skills needed to be on track for graduation and prepared for college-level work.

Discussion Questions

Students in Eva Oliver's middle school classroom are engaged.



They are having fun as they're learning. What about the class made it engaging for students? What are some examples of engaging curriculum and projects in your school? How might students be more engaged?

Because they entered Life Academy below grade level, some graduates were needing remediation classes in college. How does the need for remediation undermine student success?

Learn More

American Federation of Teachers (www.aft.org)

Center for Teaching Quality (<https://www.teachingquality.org/>)

Coalition for Teaching Quality (<http://www.coalitionforteachingquality.org/main/>)

Learning Policy Institute (www.learningpolicyinstitute.org)

National Education Association (www.nea.org)

New Teacher Center (<https://newteachercenter.org/>)



Creating and Sustaining Equitable School Systems



In the closing scene of *The Long View*, viewers learn that Superintendent Antwan Wilson had announced his departure from the Oakland Unified School District. Wilson, who spent just two years in Oakland, was the district's third superintendent in five years, the latest in a revolving door at the top that has made it difficult to sustain and deepen school and district improvement efforts.

In Oakland and around the country, the tenure of urban school superintendents is alarmingly brief. In a 2014 review of California's 30 largest school districts, the news site EdSource found that two-thirds of the superintendents had been in their post for 3 years or fewer. Nationally, the statistics are much the same. A 2014 survey of the Council for Great City Schools found that the average tenure of superintendents in the nation's largest urban school districts was 3.18 years at the times of the survey.

School and district staff, parents, and students bear the brunt of the churn at the top. "Continuity is important," says Dr. Noguera, "If you get people working on a set of initiatives and suddenly there's a total change in direction, people become discouraged and people become cynical. A lot of times, new leadership doesn't even start by asking what's working and what's not." That's a problem, says

Noguera, "because we want to sustain what's working, rather than disrupt it."

In *The Long View*, we see the impact of superintendent turnover, as then Superintendent Dr. Anthony Smith articulates the need to make budget cuts, in part by consolidating the small schools at Fremont High. "It's not just about being a big school again," says Smith. "We have to do a better job of just having a high-quality school there. I am actually very hopeful, and I demand improvement. If we are not seeing it in the data, then we better do something better and different."

Fremont staff, such as teacher Patricia Arabia, however, say the data was improving at Fremont. "We showed him how our data had finally tracked up for every one of the small schools. He wasn't interested. He had already made his decision."

A challenge throughout the country, says Dr. Noguera, is for districts to see themselves as partners of their school site staff, working together for sustained improvement. "Schools will continue to struggle without full support and partnership of school districts," says Dr. Noguera. "District leadership has to see itself as collaborators with the school sites and share the ownership

Section 5

for the challenges they face.” Instead, says Dr. Noguera, there’s often scrutiny, pressure on principals, and threats they’ll be removed without improvement.

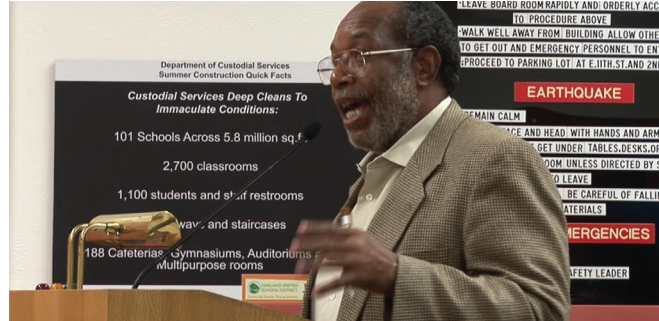
“Once you spend time in schools that are struggling, you realize the problems they face aren’t simple. They’re complex. And what we need is to be engaging in collaborative problem solving with the site leadership about how to address those problems, not simply telling them to fix it.”

Preston Thomas, former Principal at Life Academy and now Oakland’s High School Network Superintendent, has experienced the school site challenges first hand—as a teacher at Fremont High School and then as a teacher and administrator at Life Academy. “Most of what I do is informed by Fremont,” says Thomas. “I learned about the tremendous stress that the community is under. I’m not just talking about the families and the students, but also the teachers.

“One of the things that for me was always really, really, really important was to stay in the classroom for a long time. At Fremont I saw various people come into administrative roles who hadn’t been in the classroom long enough to develop their instructional background, and so I stayed teaching for 10 years. I think of all of these experiences as interconnected.”



For Thomas, Oakland’s hiring of a home-grown superintendent, Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell, is a positive step. “One of the biggest challenges in Oakland is building relationships,” says Thomas. “You need to have sustained relationships over time to effectively develop the right kind of conditions to move the organization, without being confrontational.” That’s hard to do when there is constant turnover at the top, he adds.



Community groups provide another type of stability, which can be a counterbalance to the changes in district leadership, says Dr. Noguera. “These are institutions and organizations that have a long-term commitment to Oakland. They aren’t going to leave like a superintendent,” says Dr. Noguera. “And when they are organized and clear about the strategy, like OCO was around the Small Schools’ Movement, they can hold the district accountable and say, ‘we want to continue this work’ and not have the new superintendent come in and disrupt it. And that is really important.”

Dr. Noguera adds, however, that in Oakland and elsewhere, the challenges extend beyond the schools and require more than a sustained effort of the school district to address. “You need foundations, local businesses, churches, nonprofits all working with the school system, because the problems facing districts like Oakland are not just about education; they have to do with poverty, they have to do with the instability of families, they have to do with gentrification, the high cost of housing. These are large social and economic problems that superintendents can’t fix by themselves. They need a whole-city approach. Oakland has tried this over the years, but they just haven’t sustained efforts that showed a lot of promise.”

Small Schools Revisited



Twenty years ago, Oakland Community Organizations (OCO) led an effort to create new small public schools to provide high-quality alternatives for students living in neighborhoods where schools were typically overcrowded and chronically low performing. Over the course of eight years, more than 40 new schools were spawned, with parents, teachers, and students deeply involved in the design and planning. And for seven years running, Oakland was the most improved urban school district in the state.

State and district budget woes and changing leadership resulted in a change of fortunes for some of the small schools. Some were closed or consolidated with nearby schools. In other cases, staff and families chose to convert to charter, rather than risk intervention by the district. But a core group of schools remain and among these are the three highest performing high schools in Oakland—Life Academy of Health and Bioscience, Met West High School, and Coliseum College Prep Academy.

Preston Thomas, now High School Superintendent for OUSD, was part of the first wave of small schools, which received extensive support not only for planning, but in the first years of operation. “The Small Schools’ Movement—Oakland’s first big community organizing effort to transform schooling for kids—worked,” he says. “Now, if you look at the second wave, the thing that happened to those schools is that we pulled back the supports too early.”

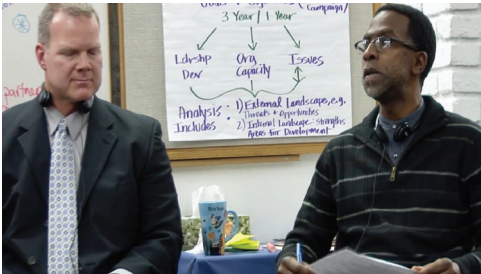


Watch the Film

▶ Superintendent Dr. Anthony Smith meets with OCO

As Superintendent Anthony Smith prepares to consolidate the small schools at Fremont High School, families and community members push for involvement.

Discussion Questions



In the film, Fremont Principal Dan Hurst says Oakland has had 7 superintendents in his 12 years in the district. How do you think the instability in district leadership impacts students, school staff, and families?

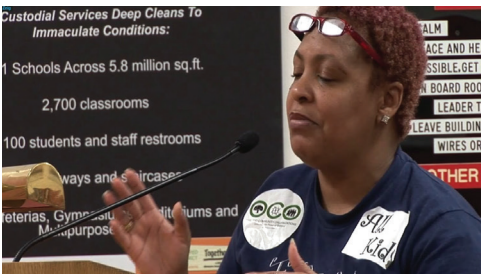
What can school boards do to increase stability in the superintendent position? What can communities do?

▶ Policy Meeting

In an attempt to provide school sites with more decision-making authority, community groups in Oakland organized to pass the district's Shared Governance Policy.

Discussion Questions

In the clip, OCO organizer Katy Nunez-Adler says, “transformation never happens at the top.” Do you agree? How have you experienced positive change in your district? What does it take to sustain improvement?



In her comments to the Oakland School Board, a community leader says, “When you have parents and teachers and administration working together you can build that support, rather than working against each other and people pointing fingers.” How could parents and teachers partner more effectively in your school or district? What are the barriers? What would be the benefits of deeper partnerships?

Learn More

Council of the Great City Schools (www.cgcs.org)

Pivot Learning (www.pivotlearning.org)

UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools (www.transformschools.ucla.edu)

WestEd (www.wested.org)

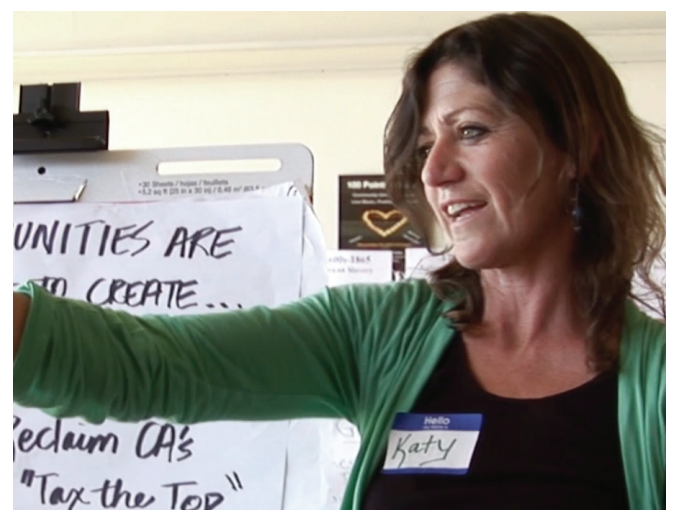
The Fight for Full and Fair Funding



In 2012, parents, students, community leaders, and clergy with Oakland Community Organizations (OCO) joined forces with organizing, labor, and faith-based groups around the state to pass Proposition 30, a statewide ballot initiative that has raised an average of \$6 billion a year for public schools and other services in the state. Turnout among low-income voters and voters of color—including many first-time voters—was a decisive factor in the passage of Proposition 30, the first tax increase passed by California in three decades.

Prior to passage of Proposition 30, funding for California schools had been slashed during the Great Recession. From 2007 to 2012, funding dropped by about 20 percent. An estimated 100,000 teachers received lay-off notices during the same period and by 2012 the teacher workforce shrank by roughly 25,500 teachers, due to layoffs and attrition. Throughout the state, school years were shortened and programs and classes were eliminated. Although all schools were impacted, those in low-income communities were least able to fill in with local funds, further exacerbating inequities. This is within the same time period that the California State economy grew to the 8th largest in the world.

Not only did Proposition 30 bring much-needed revenue to the state, it also paved the way for passage of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), a landmark overhaul of the school funding system that provided districts more spending flexibility and allocated funds based on student need. In addition to a base grant for all students, districts now receive additional funding for students who are English learners, in foster care, or from a low-income family. Districts are also now required to engage with parents, students, and other stakeholders in making budget and program decisions.



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“Inequity in funding and racial segregation in schools are the two biggest issues that affect the quality of schools in the United States today, and they are the issues we talk least about,” says Dr. Pedro Noguera, in the film. “California under Governor Jerry Brown deserves a lot of credit for changing, for acknowledging that systematically under-funding high-needs schools has contributed to these disparities in outcomes,” he adds. “Many other states are not even touching this issue.” California wasn’t alone in its drastic recession-era cuts to education. According to the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 12 states with the deepest education cuts were still below their 2008 funding levels as of the 2017-18 school year, including Kentucky, Oklahoma, and West Virginia, three states in which teachers went on strike in 2018 to protest low wages and inadequate funding of public schools.

While California has restored and increased K-12 funding beyond 2008 funding levels, the state still ranks only 32nd in spending, according to Education Week’s 2018 Quality Counts. That’s one reason why many of the same groups that worked to pass Proposition 30 are now coming together to advance a proposal to reform a provision governing assessment of business property under Proposition 13, which capped property tax increases in the state and precipitated California’s public education system’s fall from “first to worst.”

Around the country, community groups, education advocates, and civil rights attorneys have taken their fight for fair funding to the courts. A Pennsylvania lawsuit was given new life in May 2018 when the Commonwealth Court overturned objections to the lawsuit by state legislative leaders, moving it one step closer to trial. In 2012, the Washington State Supreme Court ruled that the state must fully fund K-12 schools and in 2015 began fining the state \$100,000 a day for failing to come up with a plan for full funding.

In New York State, organizers and advocates have been fighting for full and fair funding since 2006, when the Court of Appeals ruled that the state’s school

funding levels were denying students’ access to their constitutional right to a “sound and basic education.” Following the court ruling, the legislature and governor committed to a four-year phase-in of \$5.5 billion of operating aid and later enacted what’s known as Foundation Aid, which allocated additional dollars through a weighted funding formula, based on student need. The funding formula, however, has never been fully funded.



Zakiyah Ansari, Advocacy Director for the Alliance for Quality Education, has been part of the long-term effort for equitable funding. “It has been our goal and our journey that the state meets its promise to fund the schools.” To date, according to Ansari, New York City Public Schools alone are owed \$1.5 billion. AQE provides a list on its web site of the amount owed to each district in the state.

“Just look at the generations, the years, that we haven’t funded these dollars,” says Ansari. “And every time I go up to Albany, guess what, it’s just excuses, “it’s just not time.’ And here I am, my son is about to graduate high school, and other children have already graduated and have never reaped the benefits of [the additional resources].”

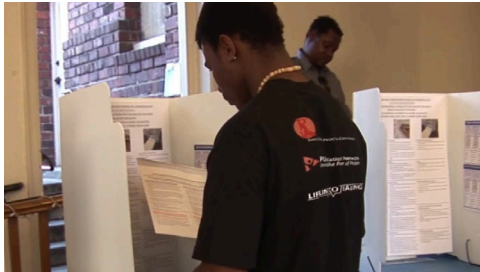
Like Emma Paulino, the OCO organizer featured in *The Long View*, Ansari says parent organizing is about sustaining a long-term struggle. “Every time we bring more folks into this conversation, we build the movement for education justice, so that after we are doing it for 20 years like Emma was, we start to build an army of education warriors who will be able to take the mantle to move forward.”

Watch the Film

▶ Get Out the Vote

In 2012, OCO was part of a grassroots organizing effort to increase voter turnout, which made a significant difference in the outcome of Proposition 30 ballot initiative.

Discussion Questions



How does work on voter engagement build power of community-based organizations?

What education funding initiatives are needed in your community?

▶ Election Results at Life Academy

Latino mothers, many of whom are unable to vote themselves, and who have experienced negative stereotyping, reflect on their role in passing Proposition 30. Veteran organizer Emma Paulino remembers when she first started she felt nervous and fearful. "But I did it. And that's what you need to do. Be afraid, but do it."

Discussion Questions

What are some of the fears you've had to overcome in order to get involved in an issue you cared deeply about? What was the impact—for yourself and for your community?



In what ways have group actions in your community helped to build power to impact change?

The additional resources from Proposition 30 paved the way for California to adopt a new funding formula, based on student need. How are schools funded in your state? To what extent does the funding formula address or compound inequities?



Learn More

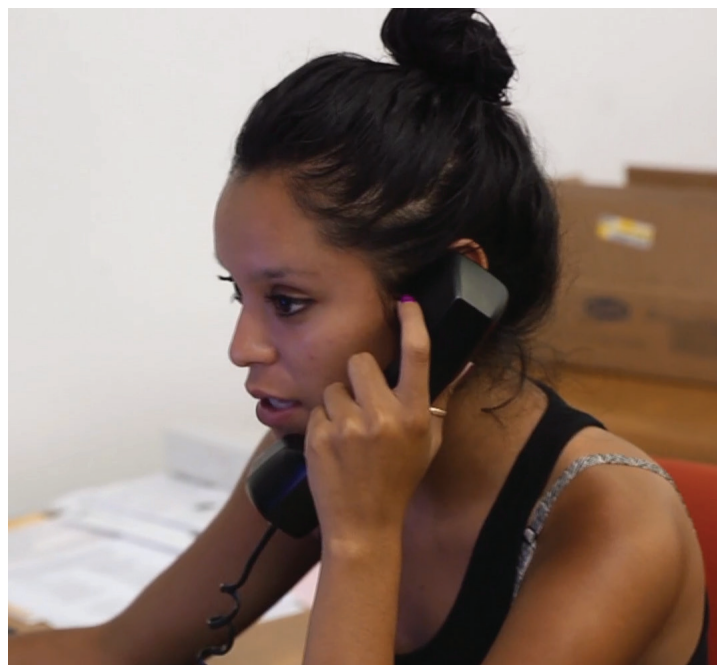
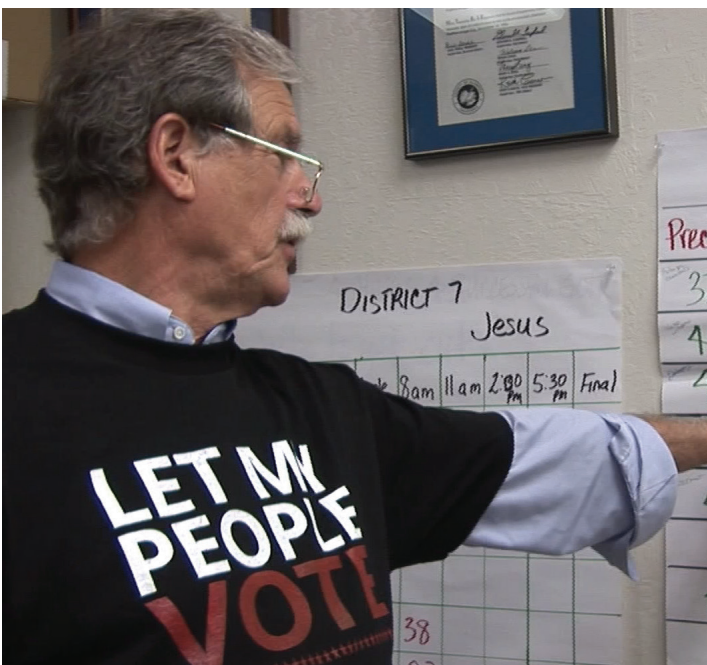
Alliance for Quality Education (www.aqeny.org)

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (www.cbpp.org)

The Education Law Center (www.edlawcenter.org)

The Education Trust (www.edtrust.org)

Education Week Quality Counts (www.edweek.org/ew/qc)



The Long View Film Credits

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Color and Sound - Du Art Film Laboratories

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Preston Thomas
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Patricia Arabia
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In Loving Memory of Eleanor Locke

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www.communityconcernfilms.org