



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

KINGMAKERS OF OAKLAND



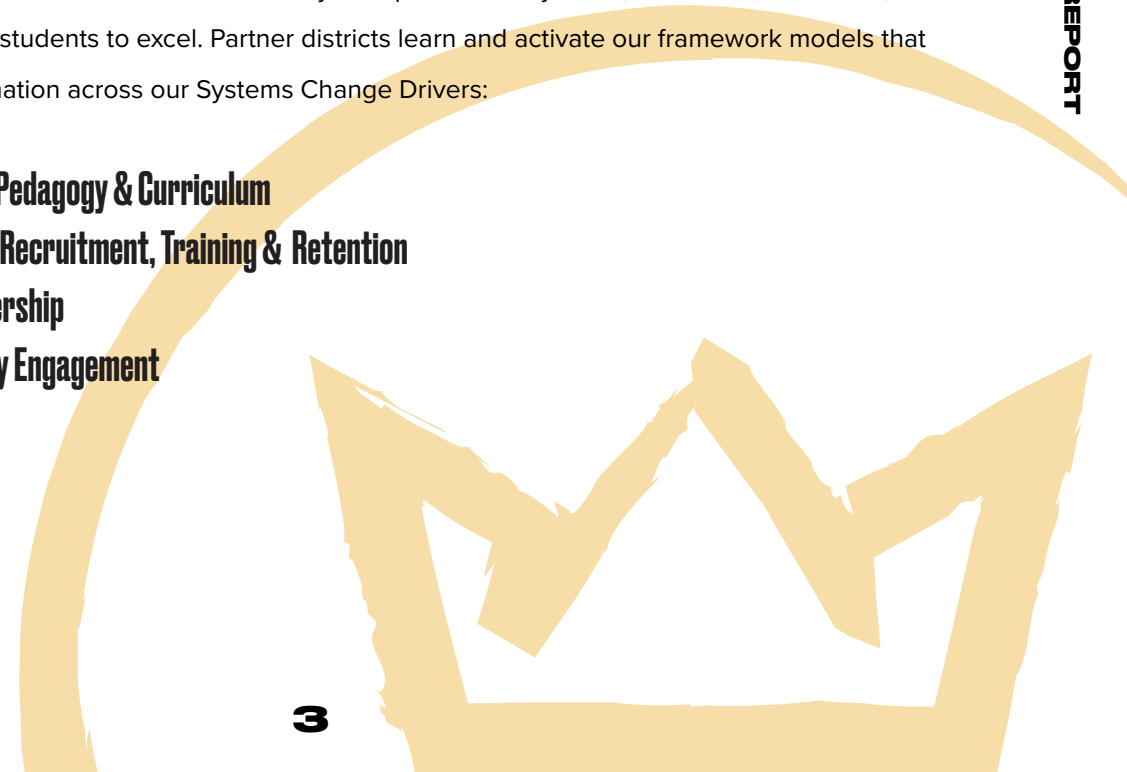
Kingmakers of Oakland is a leadership development and systems change organization committed to fundamentally transforming the education system and building the capacity of people to design and sustain thriving and liberated systems, structures, conditions, and culture to improve educational and life outcomes for Black students. This is Ancestral Work!

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, from the ashes of the California fires and amid the devastation and isolation of multiple pandemics, Kingmakers of Oakland (KOO) emerged as an organization poised to overhaul educational systems and learning conditions for Black boys across the country. Buttressed by the promise of a national movement for racial reckoning, KOO's first year with full-time staff brought triumphs, struggles, and lessons learned. This 2020-2021 Annual Report chronicles how we have grown from a department entrenched in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) into a national organization, now serving eight school districts across three states. Guided by youth voice and data-driven feedback, KOO has remained malleable and responsive during these unprecedented times of distance learning, where educational and familial systems have been disrupted and exposed. By staying true to our core values (King-Centered, Love, African Centered, Collective Will, Partnership), it allowed us to pivot and continue to engage youth, families and educators. This intense, yet generative period of hardship has positioned us to focus on our six Systems Change Drivers and set the stage for our ambitious agenda: to transform educational systems across the nation into institutions that uplift and celebrate the intrinsic potential and inherent brilliance of every Black male student.

KOO partners with public school districts nationally to improve their systems, structures, conditions, and culture for Black male students to excel. Partner districts learn and activate our framework models that build toward transformation across our Systems Change Drivers:

- 1) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy & Curriculum
- 2) Black Male Teacher Recruitment, Training & Retention
- 3) Youth Voice & Leadership
- 4) Community & Family Engagement
- 5) Narrative Change
- 6) Policy Change





**At Kingmakers of Oakland,
we fundamentally believe
that all Black males are
brilliant, beautiful, and
possess innate greatness.**

Our society and educational systems are not set up to help Black boys reach their potential. It is our collective opportunity and responsibility to co-create the school learning environment every child deserves. The Kingmakers of Oakland approach proves that it is possible to rebuild the systems, structures, culture, and conditions of school so Black boys can thrive.



KINGMAKERS OF OAKLAND ORIGIN STORY

KOO's asset-based liberatory design model engages, encourages and empowers districts to reimagine teaching and learning in a systems approach. Rooted in the Oakland district over 10 years, we built the will, tools and capacities to activate systems transformation.

At KOO's inception, a team of innovative educators, community organizers, neighborhood elders, families, and students began cultivating an idea, planted in the fertile ground of OUSD. The district superintendent at the time, Dr. Anthony "Tony" Smith, was a strong ally who leveraged his positional authority and white privilege to carve out space for Black-centered education within the district. The Office of African Male Achievement (AAMA) sprouted from this work, a bold initiative to serve and support Black male students from preschool to 12th grade in a completely different way. OUSD became the first district in the U.S. to create a department dedicated to supporting the needs, strengths, and dreams of Black male students while addressing the systems, structures, conditions and culture that perpetuate their marginalization. With roots starting to form, AAMA would need to nourish it for growth and sustenance.

At the heart of AAMA is the Manhood Development Program (MDP). MDP combines courses for African American boys led by African American male instructors using a custom-designed curriculum, Mastering Our Cultural Identity. This curriculum, developed by long-standing partner, the Khepera Curriculum Group, challenges educators to center the experiences, culture, and power of Black people, and to tap their own transformative power in doing so. The courses combined with the ManUp Conferences, student showcases, field trips, annual AAMA events, and inter-departmental pushes for racial equity; we began to see tectonic shifts across OUSD.

Within a few years AAMA had established a root system within OUSD.

We began to build out the Mastering Our Cultural Identity curriculum to include several accredited courses, including: African American Power in the US, World's Great Men & Women of Color, Revolutionary Literature, and Mastering Our Cultural Identity. We developed a Learning Collaborative approach to supporting our growing AAMA faculty of Black men. Consequently our teacher retention rates were unrivaled across the district or state. We facilitated the passage of OUSD's first policy for equity (Board Policy 5032). Our students, though, were the real evidence that AAMA's commitment to "Engage, Encourage & Empower" Black boys was working. We were watching our young kings, previously misunderstood, demoralized and pushed-out, begin to shine with curiosity and intellectual acuity. At last, they were presented with a pedagogy and curriculum that was relevant and guided by instructors who led with love.

Our model began receiving national recognition. By 2016 AAMA was honored by the Obama Administration as one of the 25 leading programs to improve educational outcomes for Black boys.

Our CEO Chris Chatmon explains, "We were telling a story, giving people permission across the country on what 'do different' looks like, what it is to be intentional and unapologetic in centering Black boys and young men. The leadership piece - it's a David and Goliath story. We are surrounded by narratives focused on failure - that is a narrative we must change. We brought kings across the country, authentically lifting up their voice, rather than tokenizing their identities. By creating an environment where kings can hold adults accountable, within student leadership council in OUSD - we reset the precedent modeling for other districts to position youth differently. What we curated there, we have codified through KOO."

"Other school districts nationally were interested in what AAMA was accomplishing, and a vision for widespread germination began to form."





AAMA bloomed into a national model for empowering Black boys and educators in urban public school systems. To share our framework and lessons learned we began hosting biannual multi-day conference events: Fall Forum and Spring Symposium. These collaborative networking opportunities, made possible through funding from the Raikes Foundation, attracted participants from across the country. Our involvement in the Building Equitable Learning Environments (BELE) Network also helped draw attention to our liberatory design and holistic approach as we strive for equity in education.

Nationally, district and school leaders began recognizing how AAMA effectively used Targeted Universalism in public schools. Simply put, Targeted Universalism, coined by University of California, Berkeley scholar John A. Powell, means using targeted strategies to reach universal goals. AAMA was the first to apply this approach at the district-level. As research out of Stanford University showed, we achieved promising results. School districts like San Francisco, Seattle, and Antioch, with an appetite for dismantling oppressive and exclusionary educational traditions, took notice. School districts across the country began to reach out, inquiring about our lessons, frameworks, and practices.

These growing interest became an opportunity for us to clarify our vision and values; with a clear set of values, we would be better positioned to bring other school districts along with us on a journey of systems transformation. We embarked upon a Liberatory Design process with the National Equity Project, an Oakland-based national leader in advancing equity-focused leadership and racial justice. Through this process we landed on our five Core Values: King-Centered, Love, African-Centered, Collective Will, and Partnership.

Kingmakers is Guided by FIVE Core Values

LOVE

Our approach is, first and foremost, rooted in love. Love of self, community culture and much more.

AFRICAN-CENTERED

Connection and understanding of our history, community, humanity and soul is key in shaping a positive Black identity, especially within an academic context.

KING-CENTERED

Black boys will always be co-creators of this work. Their voices are valued and respected as much as adults.

COLLECTIVE WILL

The cavalry is not coming to save Black boys. As members and allies of the Black community, we all have a responsibility to create change.

PARTNERSHIP

This work doesn't scale or grow without partners. We are committed to collaboration that mutually empowers both parties in our journey.

National district demands to design and implement successful frameworks that improve outcomes for Black boys, positioned us as leaders to share our proven models and support partner districts. Our Oakland Roots started extending nationally.

Our Targeted Universalism approach with a liberatory design process empowers districts with frameworks, tools and strategies to activate transformative systems change; activating all district stakeholders in a Learning Collaborative.



YEAR ONE WITH STAFF
JULY 2020 THROUGH JUNE 2021

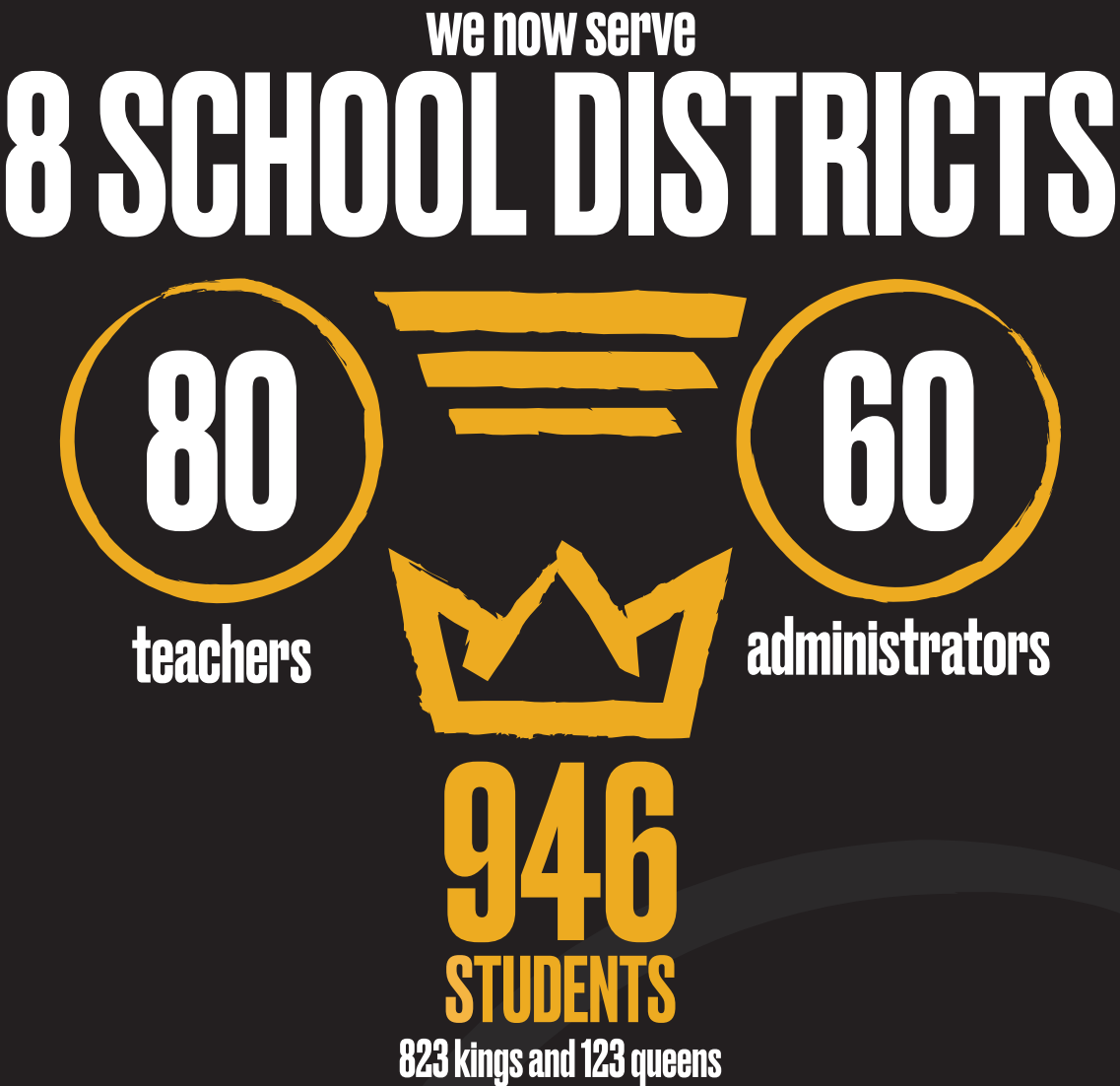
Although KOO was officially established in 2018 on paper, it wasn't until July 2020, with the National Equity Project (NEP) serving as our fiscal agent, that we hired our first staff members. NEP provided more than just fiscal sponsorship. They offered coaching and internal support around our uptake of Liberatory Design and Leading in Complex Systems. We are grateful for NEP's fiscal sponsorship and guidance that allowed us to become a fully independent non-profit organization starting July 2021.

While it was many years in the making, KOO's full launch outside of OUSD happened amid events that could not have been anticipated. The Covid-19 shut down interrupted in-person learning for most public school students, leaving districts scrambling to plan for a "new normal". George Floyd was brutally murdered by police officers in Minneapolis Minnesota, on camera, with the world watching ad nauseum. The emotional devastation of yet another act of state-imposed violence against a Black man reignited a movement for racial justice in cities across the country. Meanwhile, Black and Brown communities continued to suffer disproportionate Covid-19 infections and deaths. Loss from the economic devastation that the pandemic wrought was also concentrated among communities of color; while the move to distance learning widened existing equity gaps in American education and Black communities experienced increases in violent victimization, including gun violence and homicide.

Rather than succumb to these hardships, KOO filled the leadership gap, setting a bold agenda for 2020-2021. Since achieving our desired outcomes, we scaled up by establishing our infrastructure through staffing, fundraising, technology, and business development. We underwent a Liberatory Design process that coalesced around our six Systems Change Drivers. Led by our King-centered values, we established a Street Team that channeled a generation's frustration, pain, hope, and joy into creative expression. The dynamic Street Team conducted outreach in virtual space, amplifying Youth Voice multi-modally. As the dust settles on this extraordinary year of upheaval and change, we cast our eyes to the future and watch as our vision for the next 10 years begins to clarify on the horizon.

THE STORY OF SCALE

KOO's rate of growth this past year surpassed our projections. We brought on our first official employees in July of 2020. After one year,



Growing so quickly, our first official year of operations required a deep investment into infrastructure. We had to secure quality personnel, establish a sound and reliable revenue base, refine our program structure, cultivate district partnerships, develop our technology, along with launching new King-centered initiatives.



KINGMAKERS OF OAKLAND 2021-2022 ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Street Team Formation

Kings in the Making Album Release

KOO Kickback

Upset the SetUp I

IG Live Series

Fall Forum

Revolution Remix Music Album
Release

Upset the Setup II

THE LAB 1

Spring Symposium

THE LAB 2

Revolution Remix Film Debut

SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

District Partner Learning
Collaborative (LC)

District Partner Professional
Learning Community (PLC)

Phase 0 New District
Partnerships (Kankakee, Kent,
Puget Sound ESD)

The Fellowship Initiative (TFI)

Piedmont Avenue Elementary
School Recovery Program

Educator Culturally Relevant
Pedagogy & Curriculum Training

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

KOO approved as a 501c3 agency

KOO hires the first salaried staff

Ongoing hiring to fully staff KOO

Website Relaunch

Learning Events Platform Launch

Liberatory Workshop with
National Equity Project

KOO Student Listening Campaign

Start development of
Kings Corner Virtual Village
Smartphone App





STAFFING & COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Building the organization began by assembling a stellar team of KOO staff and consultants, capable of leading the work with humility and courage, centering those farthest away from justice in everything we do. Every member of our KOO team possesses the courage to dismantle well-established systems of oppression, and the skills to lead school district officials to cultivate that same courage and implement bold new strategies. Our team also relies upon the wisdom of youth and families who can speak to recent experiences within public school systems and whose typically marginalized voices get amplified to guide our vision.

KOO's initial employees were onboarded July of 2020. Between then and June 2021, we hired 10 full-time staff including: an Operations Director, Social Media Coordinator, Media & Technology Operations Director, Youth Music, Art & Media Director, Data Solutions Director, Learning Collaborative Director, Marketing Manager, Program Manager, Business Development Director and Youth Leaders. The media team of collaborative partners includes: a Media Coordinator, two Film Director/Producers, and a Television Producer. This outstanding team, comprised entirely of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), have been building upon the vision set out by KOO's pioneering founders: Chris Chatmon, Chief Executive Officer of KOO and former Executive Director of OUSD's office of African American Male Achievement; Baayan Bakari, KOO's chief consultant for curriculum development and national leader in transformative teaching; and Jerome Gourdine, lifelong educator and OUSD's Director of Targeted Strategies to advance racial equity.

We are fortunate to have successfully brought together this exceptional team in such a short time, especially since when we embarked upon this journey we had not secured the capital needed to support the size or caliber of personnel we acquired.

FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

During this past year, KOO successfully built partnerships with some of the most notable funders in the country. Through these alliances, KOO has grown rapidly, tripling our initial budget projections.

When the pandemic began in Spring 2020, KOO had no staff in place, only contractors. As the economic reality of the Covid-19 crisis began to take its toll, Black-led and run organizations were hit particularly hard. In the face of this unusual adversity we continued to work and to believe. The tragic and preventable murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd amplified cries for racial justice across this country, which fueled the Black Lives Matter movement. In this context many funders were looking to invest in Black-led organizations doing meaningful work, hoping to invest in proven solutions that empower the Black community. Philanthropic foundations -- eager to invest -- increasingly began to reach out as word spread about the impact of our work, which unapologetically centers the experience of Black boys and young men.

Through flexible funding from The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, The Ballmer Group, The Raikes Foundation, Google.org, and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, we were able to make crucial hires and build out infrastructure, enabling us to deepen and expand our reach to districts, educators, and young Black learners across the country. It's important to note that all of these funding partners have graciously entrusted KOO to apply our best thinking as to how to use these dollars effectively and impactfully.

The support we received gave us permission to think past our initial agenda of supporting a small number of partner districts with curriculum and coaching. Furthermore, it has emboldened us to plan an expansion of the work across the country. We recognize that the challenge at hand, namely public education systems infused with persistent racial bias, requires an audacious plan. We are grateful for all the support we have received, and we are unwilling to slow down on our pursuit of additional support. There are approximately 13,600 public school districts in the United States serving approximately 50.8 million students (educationdata.org). That translates to 7.62 million Black students, or 3.81M Black male students. Our work will not be done until we know that each and every one of those educational institutions is seeing, hearing, loving, and lifting up every one of those young kings.





PROGRAM STRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT

Based on our early partnerships with school districts such as San Francisco and Seattle, back when the work was still housed within OUSD, we developed a framework and methodology to share and export our systems change model to support school districts in their transformation. Under KOO, we expounded upon and refined that methodology. KOO's frameworks support districts to develop solution strategies along all six System Change Drivers, incubating and nurturing growth among classroom, school and district leaders.

Professional Learning Community: A core tenet of the KOO system is the recruitment, support, and retention of Black male teachers. Many of these educators are first engaged as MDP facilitators well before they have completed a teacher certification process. KOO cultivates a brotherhood of educators across districts, focused on skill-development as much as belonging and support. This is our Professional Learning Community (PLC). In the PLC, KOO facilitators (teachers) meet monthly with KOO coaches, who impart skills and lead discussions about: pedagogy; promoting positive culture and climate; maintaining an asset-based lens; social emotional competency; and activating KOO's six Systems Change Drivers within the broader educational system. Together they celebrate victories and embolden one another to succeed within educational systems in which Black men continue to be underrepresented.

Learning Collaborative: The foundation of KOO's service framework is participation in the Learning Collaborative (LC). All districts identify a multi-generational, cross functional team to participate in the LC. The LC teams comprise of senior district leadership, school-based personnel, parents, and students from each participating districts. Together districts plan and monitor action steps to advance the district across the six System Change Drivers, and learn from one another as they encounter challenges, overcome barriers, achieve successes, and learn lessons for the future.

Leadership Coaching: Research has shown that individualized coaching yields more profound improvement and transformation of practice than training alone. For this reason KOO also provides senior school and district leadership with individualized coaching and support. Fighting for change can feel lonely without a community of champions. This coaching helps empower leaders to build a movement within their communities to ensure long-term change.



DISTRICT PARTNERSHIPS

Our district partners receive a suite of services and supports, including: access to our original culturally-responsive curriculum and pedagogy; customized leadership coaching; training of facilitators/educators; and inclusion in the KOO Learning Collaborative, where leaders across districts meet regularly to learn and confer around the progress of this transformative work. This year, we convened five districts together in the Learning Collaborative (Oakland Unified School District, San Francisco Unified School District, Seattle Public Schools, Antioch Unified School District, and Alameda Unified School District), with another three districts in the “Phase Zero” preparatory stage of work (Phase Zero districts include: Puget Sound Educational Services District, Kent School District, and Kankakee School District).

Oakland Unified School District: OUSD is the birthplace of our work. KOO rose from ideas and actions that germinated from the boardroom to the classroom through OUSD’s Office of African American Male Achievement (AAMA). This district continues to maintain its AAMA program, while adding a number of other targeted initiatives that were modeled after AAMA that serve other student groups (African American Female Excellence, Asian Pacific Islander Student Achievement, and Latino/a Student Achievement). OUSD offers the Manhood Development Program (MDP) across an array of school sites. OUSD and AAMA still contract with KOO for facilitator training and leadership coaching on MDP and the other targeted strategies. As the most experienced implementers of targeted approaches and MDP; OUSD participants share insights and wisdom with other Learning Collaborative members who are earlier on their transformational journey.

San Francisco Unified School District: SFUSD was one of the first districts to take up the AAMA model after Oakland. SFUSD established MDP classes in partnership with AAMA back in 2016, so SFUSD also stands out as one of more seasoned partner districts. They continue to implement the Mastering Our Cultural Identity curriculum and serve as anchor members of the Learning Community. In the upcoming year, SFUSD will be building out work on the Youth Voice and Leadership Driver.

Seattle Public Schools: SPS established its own Office of African American Male Achievement in 2019, in partnership with OUSD’s AAMA program and Kingmakers of Oakland. Seattle’s inclusion in the Learning Collaborative marked our first steps toward creating a national movement. Now, a few years into their implementation, SPS is an emerging national leader in how to foster the cultural and academic strengths of Black male students while transforming the educational systems into places they can learn and grow. The work in SPS has taken off because the district resourced the effort, dedicated a strong, senior-level district leader to hold it, and developed a strong understanding of and commitment to the KOO theory of change prior to embarking on the work. Since then they have cultivated their own curriculum development and developed a recruitment strategy for teachers of color.

Antioch Unified School District: AUSD is a suburban, diverse district, located in the northern region of the Bay Area. AUSD adopted and began implementing KOO’s Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Pedagogy. Representatives attend the Learning Collaborative regularly, including a strong parent advocate who lifts up student needs and assets from the family perspective.

Alameda Unified School District: AUSD is the newest member of the KOO Learning Collaborative. A next door neighbor to Oakland, Alameda has a small Black population that consistently experiences disparate educational outcomes. AUSD has begun using the KOO’s Culturally Responsive curriculum and accessing KOO facilitator training and coaching. This district has also put together an intergenerational team to carry the work forward and participate in the KOO Learning Collaborative. To institutionalize the work the AUSD Board recently approved a full time Director of African American Male Achievement.

Phase Zero Districts: This year KOO began working with three districts across the country that were ready to initiate transformation in their school districts: Puget Sound Educational Services District and Kent School District in Washington State, and Kankakee School District due south of Chicago, Illinois. These districts are in what we call “phase zero,” meaning they are in a preparation process. Rather than include these newer partner districts in the Learning Community right away, we jointly lay the groundwork with these districts. Tilling and fertilizing the soil as we establish roots to grow. We coach and advise district leaders on strategies to socialize the Boards of Education to the impact, while orienting bargaining units (teachers unions, etc.) to the vision, building or connecting with district equity teams, and enlisting youth as potential leaders and champions of the work.

We spent a whole year constructing shared language with each district around our theory of change, the underlying ideology of Targeted Universalism, and how these frameworks apply in their unique context. This preparatory work is essential to prevent implementation traps and to ensure the success of the partnership. As Chris Chatmon puts it, “The work of redesigning schools in service of black boys is all based on relationships. Relationships go at the speed of trust. In order to do this work right we must build trust, will and skill. The goal is to create a conspiracy of care so the work moves from a moment to a movement.” Phase zero does just that.

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

Another substantial piece of infrastructure development is centered around technology. On one hand, the Covid-associated move to virtual communication, instruction, and collaboration has impeded the intimacy of human connection.

On the other hand, it has opened our awareness to the potential to collaborate across distance, and the powerful way that technology might advance our work. We pivoted to accomodate and grow virtual learning opportunities for our audience. These adaptations, necessitated by Covid-19, whet our appetite and drove us to integrate multiple technology platforms through our web and smartphone app portals for connectivity, collaboration and learning. We enlisted a web development firm, Meet Geraldine, to update our site and create a virtual learning platform (VLP) with online synchronous and asynchronous learning events with consistent branding. We also contracted a smartphone app developer, GH Technologies, to build out an IOs and android app for students, teachers and distrcit partners. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has stepped us with a generous grant to support funding our technology innovations.

By Fall of 2021 we will have the capacity to deliver high-quality conferences, workshops and presentations as live and independent virtual events. Eventually our VLP will support KOO's Professional Learning Community (PLC), where facilitators across multiple districts convene monthly to learn the KOO pedagogy and curriculum, while supporting each other. Our monthly PLC sessions will be supplemented with a VLP that provides structure for communication, shared lesson plans, resources, and tools to improve their proficiencies in a collaborative workspace.

For students we also pivoted to incorporate a Learning Management Systems (LMS) to host our student curriculum virtually for all partner district classes. As we continually develop K-12 multi-subject course curriculum for district partners, it will be hosted by a third-party LMS platform and intergrated into our web portal. This allows teachers and students a platform to access lessons, evaluate assignments, monitor achievements, receive learning resources, confer with parents, and collborate with each other even in distance learning environments.

We are currently developing a smartphone app to connect the Kings across districts virtually. That will be beta tested in Fall 2021 to prepare for a hard launch in Winter 2022. These technological tools are being designed and devloped by and for our young kings. The social media-style smartphone app will allow students to connect, hang out, organize, and share ideas and content. The kings are informing the app design, and indicating what features will be valuable and appealing to other youth. We conducted a listening campaign across all our district partners to elicit feedback from the students so they can support in the design and feature enhancements.

Together, these new technology platforms will ensure that KOO is relevant and responsive as our work spreads geographically.



OTHER KOO INITIATIVES

In addition to our work with districts, this year KOO advanced educational transformation in a few additional arenas, including: The Fellowship Initiative, Piedmont Elementary School listening campaign, and curriculum development.

The Fellowship Initiative (TFI): TFI is a JPMorgan Chase program that KOO delivers in Oakland, providing academic support, leadership development and African-centered curriculum to young men of color. The three-year program focuses on increasing college access and success among a cohort of young men of color. KOO has the capacity to serve 40 youth and has already enlisted 32 - 10th grade scholars this initial year. Three Saturdays a month participants meet with KOO Program Manger, Obasi Davis, and support instructors. The program focuses on academic advising, college and career preparation, mentorship, brotherhood, financial literacy, and professional and leadership development. Young kings have the opportunity to envision their college careers, tour campuses, prepare mentally and academically for college, and receive tutoring to ensure they have the grades needed to gain admittance into the college of their dreams. Notably, Mr. Davis rose through the AAMA program as a youth leader himself, creating the AAMA summer internship as a teen in 2014.

Piedmont Avenue Elementary: While most of our work is at the systems-level, we also have opportunities to work directly with students, families and schools. In the Fall of 2020, with the support of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, KOO began working with Piedmont Avenue Elementary School, a public school within OUSD with a diverse student body, nearly half of whom are Black. KOO collaborated with the school to, distribute school supplies, host Family Fun nights, and facilitate a listening campaign to re-engage Black families after Covid-19 forced distance learning. These activities gave voice to Black families and helped them alleviate the deeply-felt anxiety that distance learning would result in increasing the perpetual equity gap within this school diversity. For three months KOO connected with Black families to learn what they wanted from the school, and to gain insights into how to maximize family involvement. The results of this engagement include: low student absenteeism, a high degree of family engagement, lower stress levels among students and families, and a deepened awareness of Black history. This work also set the stage for forward motion on a number of activities including KOO Street Team presentations, early literacy programs, ongoing family engagement events, and the collaborative partnership with OUSD’s African American Female Excellence and African American Male Achievement programs throughout the school.

KOO Curriculum Development: Among our key offerings to districts and schools is our culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum. In schools that rely upon Eurocentric curriculum, students of color often find themselves struggling to embody an academic identity. It becomes a challenge to engage and achieve when one does not see oneself or one’s history represented in academic materials. For years AAMA, and now KOO, have worked to change that dynamic by developing curriculum that lifts up the cultural identity of students of color, expanding the opportunity for BIPOC students to see themselves as successful scholars. KOO partners with curriculum developers to create and license curriculum to partner districts to empower Black male students. We design curricula that build students’

understanding of “What it means and has meant to be a student of color, specifically an African-American, in American society, both culturally and emotionally, while at the same time MOTIVATING them from the transformative narrative as well as increasing their capacity for a rigorous academic career.” KOO is now expanding its culturally responsive curriculum, pedagogy and development work to ensure that all district partners have an array of multiple-subject culturally-affirming choices for all school levels, from kindergarten through high school graduation. In June 2020 we started building our internal Curriculum Team with new hires: Curriculum & Training Director Dr. Maurice Dolberry, and Curriculum Designers Cava Menzies and Uma Josi-Garcia. We will continually develop PreK-to-12th African-centered curriculum across all subjects and grade levels, designed to empower BIPOC students.





LIBERATORY DESIGN PROCESS

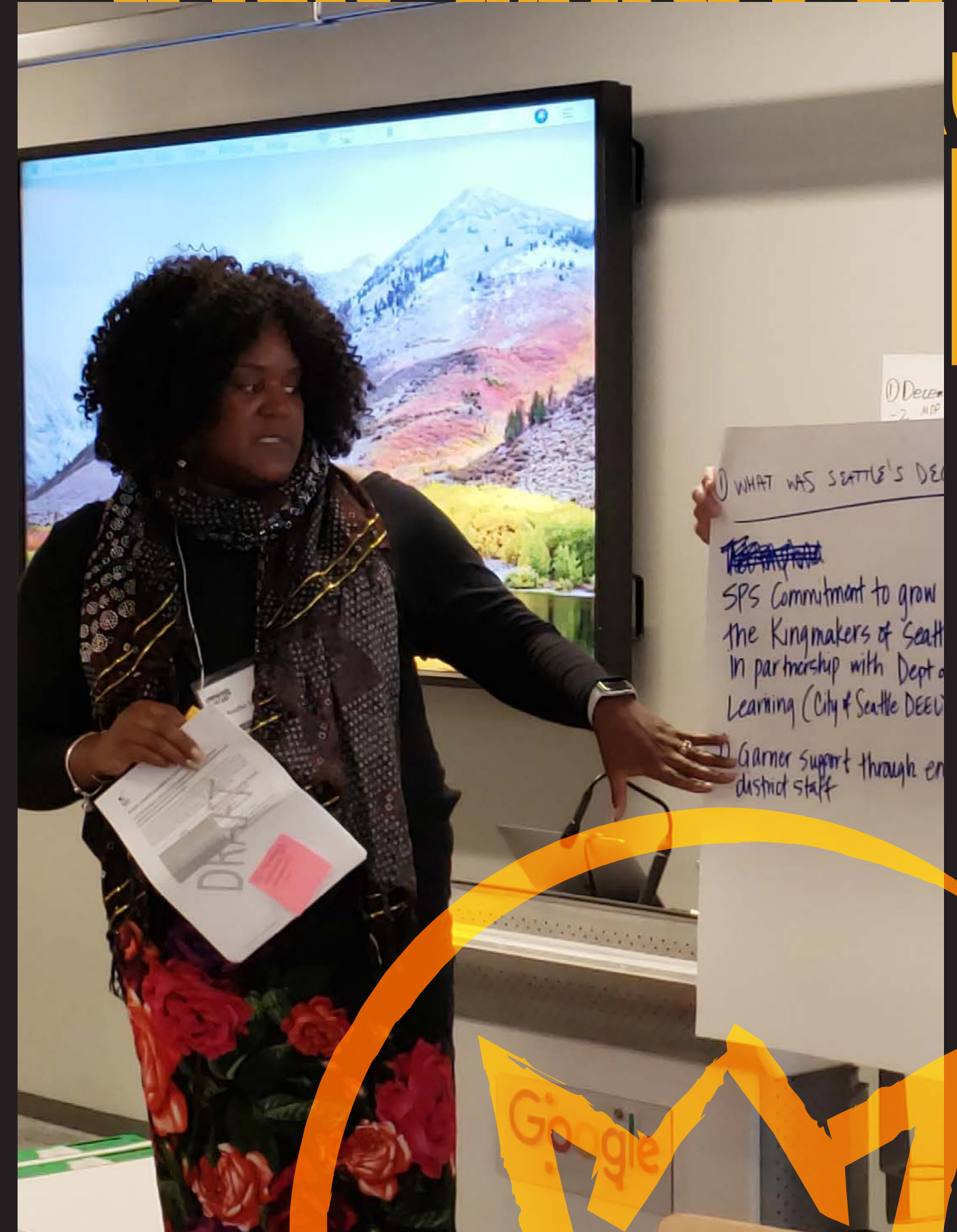
In 2016 KOO collaborated with National Equity Project (NEP) to design our bi-annual conferences. NEP acknowledged our design process is Liberatory Design. NEP is an organization committed to promoting just communities by transforming life options for children and families historically underserved or mistreated by institutions and systems. Among the services they offer; is helping organizations cultivate leadership for equity. Their approach to strategic planning is grounded in design thinking and rooted in principles of: equity, creating conditions for liberatory thinking, and rectifying imbalances of power and privilege.

Unlike other design processes, Liberatory Design challenges organizations to house decision-making power outside traditional structures of positional authority, and to authentically lift up those who have historically been denied access to power. Through deep engagement with NEP, we articulated a framework that refined our KOO methodology, which is activated through our six Systems Change Drivers. The principles of Targeted Universalism are also nested in our Systems Change Drivers, which emerged out of our Core Values. All of which reflect the fundamental belief that the cure is in our culture.

At the core of Liberatory Design are a set of beliefs:

- **Racism and inequity have been designed into systems and thus can be redesigned;**
- **Designing for equity requires the meaningful participation of those impacted by inequity; and**
- **Equity-driven designs require equity- and complexity-informed processes.**

© National Equity Project





OUR THEORY OF CHANGE & SYSTEMS CHANGE DRIVERS

The purpose of school systems should be to reveal and amplify each child’s unique gifts, perspectives, and promise. The idea that education is key to advancing equity is baked right into the American myth of meritocracy. The reality, however, is that American education systems have always functioned to acculturate children of color to Eurocentric thinking and capitalistic values. Even well-intentioned educators can become part of the machinery and unwittingly

adopt and perpetuate these underlying systemic values. It is important to note that these educational systems are particularly unhealthy for Black boys -- consciously and unconsciously, adults in school systems start with erroneous assumptions that minimize Black boys’ potential, disproportionately exclude Black students, and criminalize their behavior.

Our theory of action is embodied by the metaphor “Healing the Fish by Treating the Toxic Ecosystem.”

Our work is not about fixing Black males as they are not the problem.

How can a Black king rise to his potential in such a toxic ecosystem? While some Black boys may be able to call upon an extraordinary resource of resiliency and achieve in spite of these conditions, KOO believes they should not have more barriers to success. We aim to clean up the ecosystem so that all Black boys may succeed. We work with school districts to dismantle policies, practices, and mindsets that contaminate conditions for learning; and replace them with curriculum, personnel, protocols, and a philosophy steeped in love for Black boys.

In the meantime, we know that our Black students also need direct support to heal and undo the harm that pervasive and persistent racism has inflicted. Our work, therefore, addresses both the macro and the micro ecologies.

Operating across the six Systems Change Drivers we strive to both treat the toxic ecosystems and heal the fish. These drivers address: what is being taught and who is teaching it; how youth are empowered and families are engaged; how Black boys are seen by educators and the general public; and what policy changes are needed to establish lasting systems transformation. Each of these drivers represents a guiding principle as well as a division of our work. But none of the Drivers work in isolation from the others. In a terrestrial ecosystem, the organisms depend on the plants, which depend on the soil, which depends on the water and the minerals and other conditions of the setting. Our six Systems Change Drivers interdependently work together to build a healthy educational ecosystem for Black boys, and ultimately all students.

Healing the Fish by Treating the Toxic Ecosystem

HEAL THE FISH
Empower African American male students to thrive (despite current environment)

TREAT THE TOXIC ECOSYSTEM:
Transform the educational system & culture



THE DRIVER	THE CHALLENGE	KOO REMEDY	STUDENT-LEVEL IMPACT
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy & Curriculum	Eurocentric curriculum, teachers ill-equipped to create cultural relevance for Black students	School systems support teachers to empower their Black male students using a curriculum specifically designed to engage BIPOC students	Black male students embrace learning and reveal their genius
Black Male Teacher Recruitment, Training and Retention	Severe under-representation of Black males among US teachers (<3%)	School systems conduct targeted recruitment, development, and retention of Black male educators	Black male students see themselves reflected among their educators and experience more belonging and connection to learning
Youth Voice & Leadership	Common school practices that disempower Black students, delegitimizing their experiences and leadership potential	School systems intentionally foster Black male students as leaders and incorporate Black male youth perspectives in decision-making	Black male youth experience increased opportunity for leadership and had thoughtful input in student and family engagement strategies and activities
Community & Family Engagement	Limited avenues for Black families to engage as partners in their children's education	School systems actively outreach to and engage Black male students' families	Black male students have strong networks of support for success
Narrative Change	Deficit-based narratives in school and the media that frame Black boys as deficient, and failing in school (rather than the system failing them), which contributes to push-out, discrimination and criminalization of Black boys	School systems advance a new dominant narrative that lifts up and celebrates Black male brilliance	Black male students experience treatment by school personnel characterized by esteem and recognition of their potential
Policy	District and school policies that lead to disproportionate negative impact on Black male students	District and school policies prioritize racial equity and the intentional reversal of discriminatory practices	Black male students thrive in school systems



THE STREET TEAM

The KOO Street Team represents a major area of accomplishment this year, supporting both youth voice/leadership, narrative change and community and family engagement. The Street Team formed in March 2020, as a group of 10 activated Black youth, ages 15-25, wanted to provide opportunities for student voice and leadership.

Each member of the KOO Street Team brings a different skillset to the work of producing events and engagements and generating creative content to show the world what Black youth have to say and share. The age range within the Street Team lends to a peer-mentoring dynamic, with older, more experienced members offering support to their younger peers, and youth providing older members with inspiration and perspective.

Normally, a street team would be out in the world, on the street, to promote and generate buzz around a product or event. However the KOO Street Team began during Covid and in its first year only met in person three times at: the KOO Kickback, Piedmont Elementary Back2School Give Away, and the Revolution Remix Oakland screening. Despite their physical separation, this team produced a staggering number of events and products. These young leaders organized complex events, facilitated discussions, and generated content that lent voice through social media platforms to a generation's experience during this year of crisis and unity, despair and aspiration.

During its first year, with the purpose of facilitating youth-driven responsive engagement, the KOO Street Team accomplished an array of events and products, including:

KOO Kickback: In June of 2020, before KOO had even hired its first full-time employees, the Street Team gathered families and and organized youth performances. This was our last in-person event, before Covid-19 safety measures went into full effect. The open-air event, held at Oakland's Lake Merritt, featured live performances, youth voice and focused on healing and self-care. We attracted 100-150 local Oakland youth and adults for the cultural event.

Upset the Set-Up (Part I): On August 17, 2020, the Street Team convened KOO's first Upset the Set-Up forum - a national conversation giving Black youth a platform to explore and dialogue about current and timely topics. Discussions covered community uprisings, returning to school (including online), disrupting systems of oppression, and life after trauma. It was a national, virtual conversation involving 89 youth from across the country, and revealing powerful insights as to how youth were feeling after a summer of tumult.

IG Live: In July 2020 the Street Team launched live Instagram shows. One, called Breaking Bread, ran every Saturday for 40 consecutive weeks to cover current events, tackle critical conversations like defunding the police, and offer uplifting content like music from KOO's youth-produced music albums (Kings in the Making and Revolution Remix). The other, Crossroads, covers the intersectionality of Blackness; where individuals who do not identify



as Black boys, but whose voices are indispensable in the work that KOO is advancing. Crossroads was hosted by two dynamic Street Team members who lifted up perspectives from trans and nonbinary Black youth, young women, and Black leaders from various generations. The shows ran July through December 2020.

The Lab 1: Recognizing that our movement's ability to remain at the forefront of change requires, among other things, being tech savvy. In January 2021 KOO and the Street Team held a youth tech and equity summit dubbed "The Lab". Partnering with Google.org, Equal Opportunity Schools, and the Kapor Center, the Street Team spearheaded the virtual event that had national reach, engaging 189 participants, most of whom were BIPOC youth. Featuring intergenerational speakers, including developers from Oakland's own Hidden Genius Project, the event covered topics such as artificial intelligence, app development, graphic design, and social media algorithms. It highlighted a diverse array of pathways

into tech, the event asked participants to explore ways that technology can be relevant for BIPOC youth and a movement for change and inclusion within the industry.

Upset the Set-Up (Part II): In February 2021 the Street Team hosted a follow-up conversation to offer youth from across the country a platform to revisit topics examined in the August 2020 conversation, and to share new insights. Thirty-five young people aired grievances and frustrations they were experiencing, including the challenges of distance learning, zoom burn-out, and disconnection in general during the Covid-era.

The Lab 2: Coupled with our Spring Symposium, The Lab 2 featured video performances, tech talks, branding presentation, and multiple workshops covering music production, AI, social media, and more. Drawing over 80 BIPOC youth participants from across the country, this media tech equity youth summit was produced by the Street Team and included partnerships with Kapor Center, Equal Opportunity Schools, and Google.org.

Revolution Remix Film: This film is a creative achievement in which Black youth express rage, solidarity, and hope in response to the George Floyd murder and ensuing social movement for change. In June 2021 KOO, with Street Team support, produced seven private screenings in front of over 300 people virtually. We also produced two in-person screenings in Seattle and Oakland. One of the most powerful quotes from the SF screening was, "The generation of today speaks through film." Another SF viewer reflected, "The expression through dance, music, and poetry was healing. Revisited the trauma gives people a place to talk about it in community intergenerationally - male, female, nonbinary, Black, white, Latinx, Asian."

We start all events with a land acknowledgment, with KOO rituals and values. At the screenings the Street Team facilitated conversations around the film and where we are as a nation today. Youth often help balance adults - sometimes adults trigger each other, however when a young person leads we can all be in service of youth. To see the young people we were serving, now leading - is tremendously powerful. The film brought everything and everyone together.



KINGMAKERS BI-ANNUAL CONFERENCES

Fall Forum: KOO's Fall Forum is a multi-day conference showcasing the Kingmakers of Oakland framework models. In October of 2020, we produced this event to provide educators, activists, advocates, family, and youth the opportunity to learn ways to address the systems, structures, conditions, and cultures that can lead to improved educational outcomes for African American boys from Pre-K to 12th grade.

Spring Symposium: In April 2021, we produced the Spring Symposium 2021: The Cure is in Our Culture. KOO's annual Spring Symposium is an opportunity for educational leaders from across the country to gather and learn about ways to improve educational life outcomes for Black youth. The two-day summit provided a variety of experiences for the participants who joined, including: virtual classroom observations of the KOO theory of change at work, a keynote address by former Superintendent of OUSD Dr. Tony Smith, and the debut screening of the short film, Revolution Remix.

SHAPING KINGMAKERS OF OAKLAND'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE





KOO'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As our CEO Chris Chatmon sees it, what we have accomplished this year will continue to grow root systems of tools, resources and leaders that proliferate across districts to create structures and ecosystems that heal and empower us all to serve children we have not yet even fathomed. As we envision KOO ten years into the future, we anticipate building our capacity to transform educational systems, expanding our influence across the country, and building multiple mechanisms for amplifying the voices of Black boys and men.

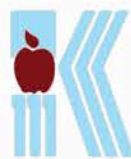
As we dream of what the future holds, below are some of our key aspirations:

- **100 districts in 10 years:** Over the next decade we expect to expand our impact far beyond our current reach. We are already developing our first national Request for Proposals inviting public school districts from Texas to Florida to apply to partner with KOO. Applying districts will identify where they stand in the process according to a readiness rubric we developed. Selected districts will make a multi-year commitment to themselves and the process of transformation. We eagerly anticipate building out our infrastructure to resource the work in the South and ensure these districts receive the technical support they need to advance along our Systems Change Drivers. KOO will leverage philanthropic funding to support these southern districts, with matching funds from the districts themselves. Eventually, we see our work moving into the East Coast, Midwest, and beyond.

- **Virtual Learning Platform:** We have designed and implemented a technology plan that integrates multiple learning platforms to increase our support and reach learners of all ages for students, professionals and community members. We are creating and integrating four main platforms that access our learning environments:
 - District partner virtual learning platform
 - PreK-12 student-based learning management system (LMS)
 - King's Corner virtual village smartphone app
 - Public events virtual learning platform for education professionals, youth, and community members who are not currently district partners
- **KOO Design Center:** We are launching a capital campaign to erect a KOO Design Center that will include technical studios where we can continue elevating youth voice through poetry, music, and film. Our hope is to secure funding that will enable us to build the Center within three year's time. The Center will also be a place where we can bring district teams together to activate design thinking within a Liberatory Design process to germinate ideas and strategies for transformation in their respective communities.
- **Certification in KOO Pedagogy:** We are planning to develop a system for educator accreditation. In this system, teachers who undergo training in the KOO pedagogical approaches will receive a certificate demonstrating they met the gold standard for culturally responsive teaching. This will significantly build our capacity to deliver on both Systems Change Drivers: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy & Curriculum and Black Male Teachers.
- **Mindfulness & Training Retreat Center and Rites of Passage Youth Camp:** We are hoping to acquire a piece of land in the Northern California. We will build a center and camp to hold retreats, provide extensive professional development, and the student Rites of Passage program. This will be a place surrounded by natural beauty and tranquility where educators will be trained across our System Change Drivers while rejuvenating, connecting, and healing.
- **KOO Production House:** A high level of interest has been generated in response to the music and film that our kings have been producing over the last year. This success has helped us to recognize the opportunity that lies in building a KOO music and film production house. By supporting youth to creatively express themselves, we can help launch new artists, prepare young people for careers in music and film production, and perhaps even generate revenue to sustain KOO's ongoing work.

In promoting a "Negro Academy" that would nurture Black intellectual achievement, solidify racial unity, and vanquish inequality, W.E.B Du Bois wrote, "[O]ur one haven of refuge is ourselves, and but one means of advance, our own belief in our great destiny, our own implicit trust in our ability and worth." KOO seizes upon this notion, working with districts nationally to build greenhouses where Black boys may thrive within a public institution that was not conceived with their growth, health or well-being in mind. We privilege youth voice in this academy, lift up opportunity for Black male educators, and work collectively to dismantle the systems, policies, and practices that would otherwise undermine the inherent beauty and brilliance of Black boys. In essence, we create that "haven of refuge."

DISTRICT PARTNERS



FUNDING PARTNERS



COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS





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ANNUAL REPORT 2021

KINGMAKERS

OF OAKLAND