




# ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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# LETTER FROM CEO & FOUNDER

**Kingmakers of Oakland (KOO) is at an extraordinary moment in our journey. January 2023 marked our first 18 months as a fully autonomous 501(c)3 organization, striving to transform education across the nation into liberated centers of learning where the systems, practices, culture and conditions uplift the inherent brilliance and intrinsic potential and of every Black male student.**

While KOO has made significant progress our country has taken several steps back with the decision by some southern states to pass laws that restrict teaching certain concepts related to race, racism and gender in schools. These proposed laws limit educators' ability to have open and honest discussions about identity, history, race, and navigating complex social issues. Fortunately, in a moment of expansion last year, we were able to start groundbreaking work in Gwinnett County and left the district with a path forward to center Black boys in the classroom.

KOO helped to build the power of Black boys in Gwinnett County by ensuring their voices were heard by teachers and administrators to create more engagement in learning activities. Their stories were documented in our Portrait of a King series, which is a key to unlocking the narrative change that needs to occur in our country. These honest and important stories provide more accurate and diverse perspectives and alternatives. Narrative change is one of our critical drivers that we deeply invest in. Our asset-based narratives stack up to successfully build a movement that allows transformation to happen.

KOO Labs Design Center and Production House opened its doors in late 2022. We will renovate over the next two years to develop place-based programs and training work we've been doing in schools and communities. Our brick and mortar presence will continue the legacy that we started in Oakland schools. We have chosen to go deeper at the local level to accelerate the content we develop that is leveraged by the School Service Delivery Team in classrooms across the country, and one day, in countries representing the African diaspora.

The content we produce feeds our culturally relevant curriculum, materials and mediums that come eye level with Black and brown youth, is verse to our pedagogy. KOO Labs will continue to incubate and innovate ideas as well as become a place where our Kings and the community can heal, love, grow, and design together outside the school ecosystem. That innovation is being driven by some key new roles at KOO. We grew our team, expanding our staff of stellar individuals, cultivating support from an exceptional group of strategic partners.

KOO has constructed a blueprint for greater impact than we ever could have possibly imagined five years ago. The past 18 months have been particularly productive; as educational institutions re-emerged from the pandemic, KOO secured land, forged new partnerships and produced bold creative works. We produced a new album Black Joy, Conscious Hip Hop that is the music to our movement, we developed storylines to continue the graphic storytelling opportunity that began with our partner in (South Africa) a leading hub for anime and gaming and represents how we aim to reach and grow our efforts in the global African community.

KOO aims to be part of an international movement to rewrite the narrative of what matters in education and how it should be measured, recognizing that traditional metrics for success aren't equitable for Black, Brown and poor students. A commitment to equity means moving away from assessments designed to support white supremacy and toward qualifying and quantifying key youth assets such as: belonging, self-efficacy, cultural identity, and collective responsibility. When data emphasizes the resiliency of youth, it reorients educators toward student strengths and enables them to appreciate the value of every young mind.

As you read this annual report which documents a tremendous amount of work and growth, I think it will be clear that our team remains true to our mission and core values. As we build the capacity of educational systems to center those furthest from opportunity, schools are far more effective in serving all. In this Targeted Universalism approach KOO helps make the invisible visible by giving power to Kings as co-designers of the work. We look to the future with the acknowledgement that what we do is legacy work. We are already seeing the generational impact of Kings who started with us as 12-year-olds and begin to take the helm leading KOO initiatives and programs from our Board of Directors to our Program Staff.

It takes seven generations for the monarch butterfly to make its migration. Similarly, we know that with each new generation of Kings, KOO gets closer to the mountaintop, closer to the vision we share where all people recognize the genius, brilliance and beauty of our Black boys.

*Chris Chatmon*

**Chris Chatmon**  
CEO and Founding Board Member  
Kingmakers of Oakland



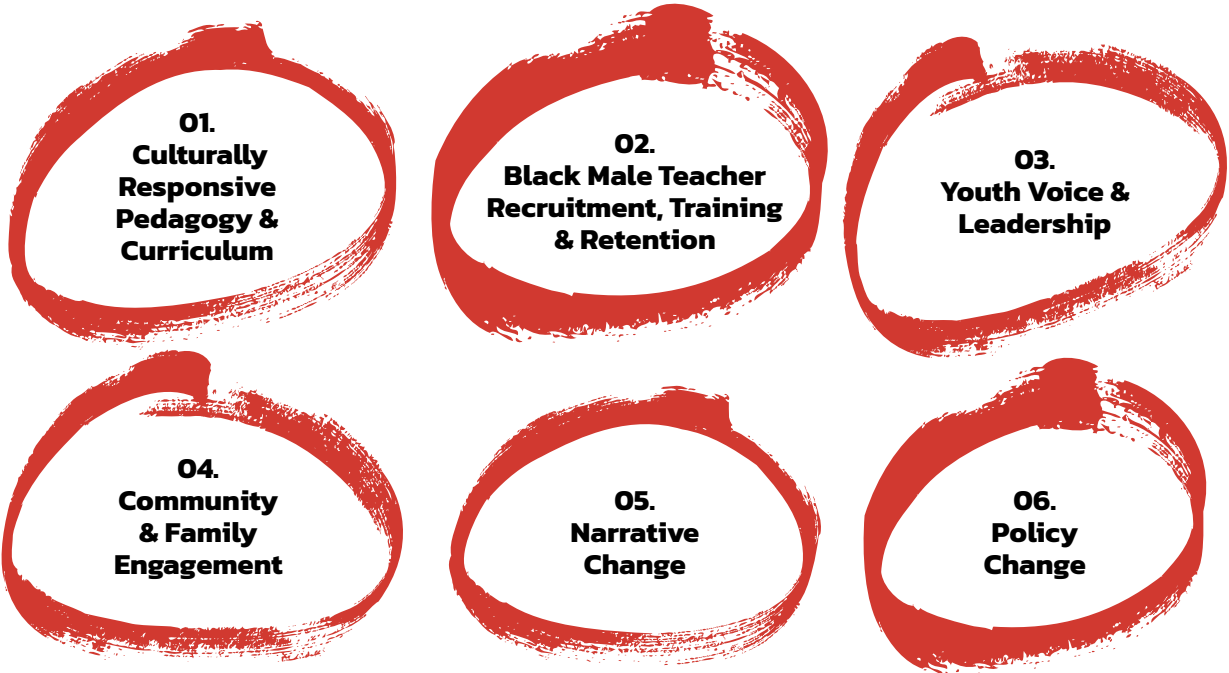


**BLACK BOYS  
ARE KINGS WITH  
UNIQUE GIFTS  
AND INHERENT  
GENIUS.**

# INTRODUCTION

**Kingmakers of Oakland (KOO) 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.**

Because society and educational systems have not been designed to help Black boys reach their potential; KOO aims to rebuild the systems, structures, culture, and conditions required to uplift the intrinsic potential and inherent brilliance of every Black male student. KOO partners with public school districts nationally to ensure Black male students excel. Partner districts learn and implement KOO strategies that optimize leadership to build culture and systems that transform districts across KOO's six Systems Change Drivers:



For KOO, 2022 presented an opportunity for phenomenal growth and building. In our first 18 months as a fully independent nonprofit, starting July 2021, we were able to staff up the organization with an innovative, courageous, and exceptionally skilled workforce committed to KOO's five core values: King-Centered, Love, African Centered, Collective Will, and Partnership.

This year, we've deepened and expanded relationships with funding partners to stabilize our organization. With this firm undergirding we have invested in a brick-and-mortar building, KOO Labs, that will serve as a placed-based community program hub and current headquarters. We are building out a design center and production house that offers community-based programming to empowers members with opportunities to develop marketable skills across multiple industries. KOO Labs will be an incubator for: youth-generated music, video and clothing; a learning space for parents and educators; and a community space for discovery, discussion, and celebration. After the past two and a half years, when concerns for safety have necessitated virtual learning and convening; our community is hungry for a physical space to gather. Located in West Oakland, a Black economic zone and birthplace of the Black Panther Party; KOO Labs will be a place for human connection, creativity, and imagination – all the qualities that movement-building requires.

"TRANSFORMATION  
HAPPENS THROUGH  
PROXIMITY."

– **Anthony Shoecraft,**  
KOO Managing Director of  
Business Development





"[When we partner with districts] we are very intentional around not stepping in as experts or know-it-alls, but creating spaces to authentically engage in conversations about what it means to center Black boys."

— MATIN ABDEL-QAWI,  
KOO Chief Program Officer

# DISTRICT PARTNERSHIPS

**KOO to transforming education systems and building the capacity of people to design and implement conditions and culture to improve learning and life outcomes for Black students.**

**At Kingmakers of Oakland we believe the current education system is failing Black boys, inhibiting them from reaching their full potential. We also believe that all Black males are brilliant, beautiful, and possess innate greatness!**

Our primary strategy is to partner with K-12 public school districts, guiding them as they transform school culture, conditions, and practices. We furnish tools and frameworks to help them intentionally center Black boys yet improve experiences and outcomes for all Black students. Through Targeted Universalism our framework yields improvement for all students. [Dee, Thomas & Penner, Emily: Stanford, 2019]

District partners receive coaching to: change policy and practice, recruit, hire and retain Black male educators, and implement our Manhood Development Program (MDP) classes with fidelity. They gain access to KOO's African-centered and culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum, a learning community of committed educators and leaders, strategies for lifting youth voice and involving youth in power structures, and connections to educational leaders across the country who provide peer learning opportunities and inspiration.



## Oakland Unified School District

KOO's work originates from models built within Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) – the organization emerged from the programs and practices developed through OUSD's Office of African American Male Achievement (AAMA). As our flagship district, OUSD continues to grow its AAMA program, both in size and impact. This past year, OUSD expanded MDP to twelve sites (more schools than ever before), and the number of sites requesting MDP classes is on the rise. This year KOO co-hosted a empowering retreat with OUSD's AAMA, led by Raquel Jimenez, the district's Office of Equity Executive Director. We explored the nuances of the KOO-AAMA collaboration and defined the parameters and vision for maximizing our joint impact. The past year has marked a deepening of trust and connection between the two organizational bodies, and a renewed commitment to ensure ongoing support, collaborative fundraising, and reliance on OUSD as an elder within our intra-district Learning Collaborative.

## San Francisco Unified School District

San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) was the first district to replicate the AAMA model, and has been serving kings with MDP classes since 2016. SFUSD's partnership with KOO is leading the way in teacher recruitment and retention. Across the state, school districts are struggling with teacher shortages, and San Francisco is no different. KOO's deep understanding of how to recruit and support Black male educators is particularly valuable to SFUSD at this time. In December 2022, KOO held a Black Teacher Recruitment Event in partnership with SFUSD. KOO has been forging collaborations with local post-secondary educational institutions such as City College of San Francisco (CCSF) and San Francisco State University (SFSU) to create multiple pathways to complete post secondary certifications, credentials and degrees. The objective is to leverage local educational opportunities in order to streamline access to culturally relevant pedagogical training for Black men, irrespective of their educational starting point. In other words, whether they have no college, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree, a Black man interested in becoming an educator will find support that will lead to a district role. This work has the potential to become a blueprint for KOO partner districts across the country.



## Antioch Unified School District

Antioch Unified School District (AUSD) is a racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse suburban district located in the northeastern edge of the Bay Area. AUSD's partnership with KOO is shepherded by a strong, committed advocate who expects to expand the recruitment of both MDP facilitators and students in the upcoming year. KOO provides marketing support, including video promotion, highlighting the district-level, educator-level, and student-level benefits. KOO is supporting AUSD in its development of an ethnic studies curriculum. Since the 2021 passage of Assembly Bill 101, a historic bill making Ethnic Studies a high school graduation requirement in California, many District Partners have expressed a need for expertise in culturally responsive curriculum development to help them fulfill the promise of the legislation. KOO is poised to expand this offering.



## Seattle Public Schools

Despite challenges, including a teacher strike at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, Seattle Public Schools (SPS) continues the progress it has made in partnership with KOO. A particular focus this year has been the quality of MDP classes. KOO staff regularly visit MDP classes to provide support, coaching, and feedback to MDP facilitators, to ensure that every king in an MDP class is engaged, encouraged, and empowered. Recently the work has leveraged technology, with virtual observation and feedback sessions enabling more frequent and efficient quality improvement strategies. This breakthrough work may serve as a prototype for maintaining excellence across the country.



## Puget Sound Educational Service District

Puget Sound Educational Service District's (PSESD's) collaboration with KOO focuses on youth voice and leadership. The work leverages PSESD's Youth Wisdom Council creating structures to elevate the input and influence of youth of color within district decision-making. KOO supports fulfilling PSESD's Road Map Improvement Collaborative's goal of "creating just and humanizing schools." Among the district's action priorities are recruitment and retention of a diverse educator workforce, elevating the voices of youth of color, and advancing cultural responsiveness and racial equity. KOO works closely with a multi-generational PSESD team to actualize this vision.

## Gwinnett County Public Schools

This year KOO welcomed a new district partner into the family. Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) is the largest school system in Georgia, with 183,000 students, approximately 33% of whom are Black. The preparatory work conducted in collaboration with GCPS leaders has been extensive, intentional, and grounded in Liberatory Design. The initial conversations set the groundwork for every district, and in Gwinnett, KOO has ensured the work of centering Black boys is being led by Black youth. Kings are facilitating discussions about what it takes to change the narrative, and to build systems that counter-act racist histories, practices, and institutions. KOO's transformative ambition is made more complex in Gwinnett, located within a state where the legislature is openly hostile having passed a bill restricting educators from discussing race in schools. In recognition of this complexity, KOO produced 'Portraits of a King' film vignettes featuring eight kings from the Gwinnett community, generating energy and enthusiasm for what a partnership with KOO can accomplish. This foundation-laying work has helped orient stakeholders to the KOO philosophy, vision, and method, and this large district is now on solid ground to partner with KOO to build transformational structures.



# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

**This past year, KOO has partnered with generous benefactors. Their investment serves as a durable girder upon which KOO will continue to build.**

# DISRUPTIVE PHILANTHROPY

/dis'rəptiv fə'lanTHrəpē/

**noun: A funding approach that is bold and courageously authentic enough to go against the traditional ways of investing.**

On its face, philanthropy is a way to redistribute wealth. The truth, however, is that conventional philanthropy often erects barriers for grantees that replicate a paternalistic power dynamic. Conventional philanthropists may impose steep reporting requirements, set inflexible restrictions on how grantees expend funds, or fuel rivalries among mission-aligned organizations. Rather than truly supporting a grantee's vision for a better world; these approaches may inhibit community-based organizations, especially those designed to topple entrenched systems of oppression. In this way, conventional philanthropy tends to replicate an authoritarian dynamic. Disruptive philanthropy, by contrast, breaks that model, eliminating barriers and freeing grantees to maximize their impact. Disruptive philanthropy honors the wisdom of the grantee, and interrogates the white supremacy embedded in building blocks of wealth accumulation in this country. It recognizes that, by and large, philanthropy dollars derive from generational wealth philanthropies in America, and that philanthropic giving is an opportunity to make reparations. We need more disruptive leaders in philanthropy!



# KINGMAKERS OF OAKLAND FUNDERS

**ALASKA AIRLINES**  
**ARMANINO FOUNDATION**  
**BALLMER GROUP**  
**BRIGHT FUNDS**  
**BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION**  
**CHAN ZUCKERBERG INITIATIVE**  
**CITY OF OAKLAND**  
**CLEVELAND AVENUE FOUNDATION**  
**CREATING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES**  
**THE COMCAST NBCUNIVERSAL FOUNDATION**  
**EAST BAY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**  
**ENTERPRISE HOLDINGS FOUNDATION**  
**FUNDERS FOR ADOLESCENT SCIENCE TRANSLATION**  
**GILEAD FOUNDATION**  
**GOOGLE FOUNDATION**  
**GOLDEN STATE GRAND CHAPTER O.E.S.**

**JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION**  
**JP MORGAN CHASE FOUNDATION**  
**KAISER FOUNDATION**  
**KAPOR FOUNDATION**  
**NETWORK FOR GOOD**  
**NEW SCHOOL VENTURES FUND**  
**OAK FOUNDATION**  
**OAKLAND FUND FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**  
**RAIKES FOUNDATION**  
**REPUBLIC SERVICES, INC.**  
**SALESFORCE FOUNDATION**  
**SATTERBERG FOUNDATION**  
**SEAHAWKS CHARITABLE FOUNDATION**  
**SILICON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**  
**TIDES FOUNDATION**  
**WARRIORS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**



A group of Black boys in a school hallway. One boy in the foreground is smiling and wearing a blue jacket with a crown logo. Other boys are visible in the background, some holding books.

**IMPROVING THE SYSTEMS,  
STRUCTURES, CONDITIONS,  
AND CULTURE OF SCHOOL  
SO THAT BLACK BOYS CAN  
THRIVE**





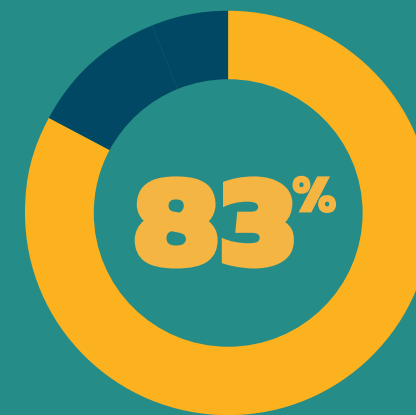
# FINANCIAL PROFILE

**KOO supports district systems work through partnerships with both philanthropic organizations and school districts. For FY22 (July 2021 to June 2022), the majority of our income came from philanthropic investments.**

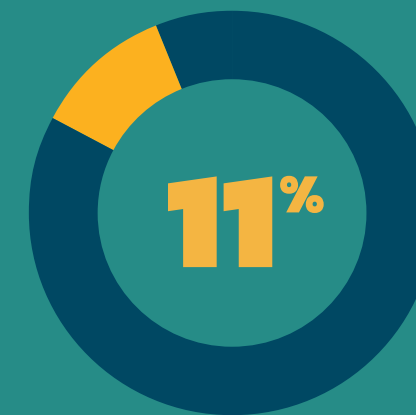
KOO focused resources on District Partner services and direct-service programs; with smaller proportions supporting administrative and fundraising functions. We plan to grow our relationships with partner districts while increasing earned income through professional development events, workshops, courses, and narrative change products and services. Our new place-based KOO Labs Design Center & Production House will provide value to the community while increasing revenue stream opportunities. KOO Labs offers music production, media production, animation production, clothing production, and workforce development in each of those industries. KOO Labs will also become a learning and practice center for education, leadership, and health & wellness activities.

- **MDP Sites – 30**
- **MDP Classrooms – 37**
- **MDP Kings – 1020**
- **Trained Facilitators – 32**
- **Hrs Of Coaching, Training and Professional Development via Professional Learning Community – 1355**
- **Family/Community Engagement Events – 14**
- **Family/Community Engagement Attendees – 1650**
- **TA Hours Via Learning Collaborative – 168**
- **Engaged Learning Collab Participants – 16**
- **Engaged TFI Participants – 32**
- **KOO Media Academy**
- **Two National Education Equity Conferences – 320**

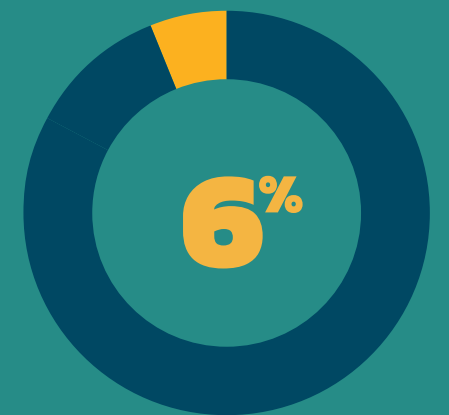
## FUNCTIONAL ALLOCATIONS



Program Services 83.0%

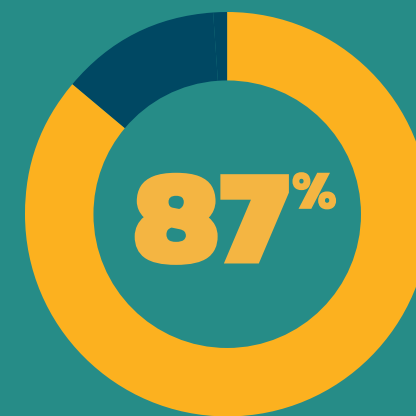


Administrative Services 11.0%



Fundraising 6.0%

## PHILANTHROPY & GRANTS



Foundation Grants 87.0%



Program Service Fees 12.0%



Other 1.0%

KOO is unreserved in naming “love” as a guiding value, a fundamental element of manhood, and a primary ingredient in teaching.

KOO Founder & CEO, Chris Chatmon, explains how the concept of love is operationalized throughout KOO, and specifically in MDP classrooms:

“It is really conditioning yourself to love unconditionally and not accepting mediocrity. It means that you’ll do whatever you need to do to get students connected to the support that they need to be whole, be happy and acquire the necessary learning objectives and outcomes that they so are deserving and are worthy of.”

# THE SIX SYSTEMS CHANGE DRIVERS

**KOO’s work is grounded in six drivers of systems change: culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum; Black male teacher recruitment, training and retention; youth voice and leadership; community and family engagement; narrative change; and policy change.**

We push for progress along each of these drivers, from partnering with school districts, to content production, to working directly with kings. While each of the drivers is listed as a discrete focal area, the truth is that working toward one driver almost always builds momentum toward another - by lifting up youth voices we help change the narrative, by changing district policy we enable improved Black male teacher recruitment, on and on. Below we have described some highlights under each of the six drivers.

01.  
Culturally  
Responsive  
Pedagogy &  
Curriculum

02.  
Black Male Teacher  
Recruitment, Training  
& Retention

03.  
Youth Voice &  
Leadership

04.  
Community  
& Family  
Engagement

05.  
Narrative  
Change

06.  
Policy  
Change



1) Culturally Responsive Pedagogy & Curriculum

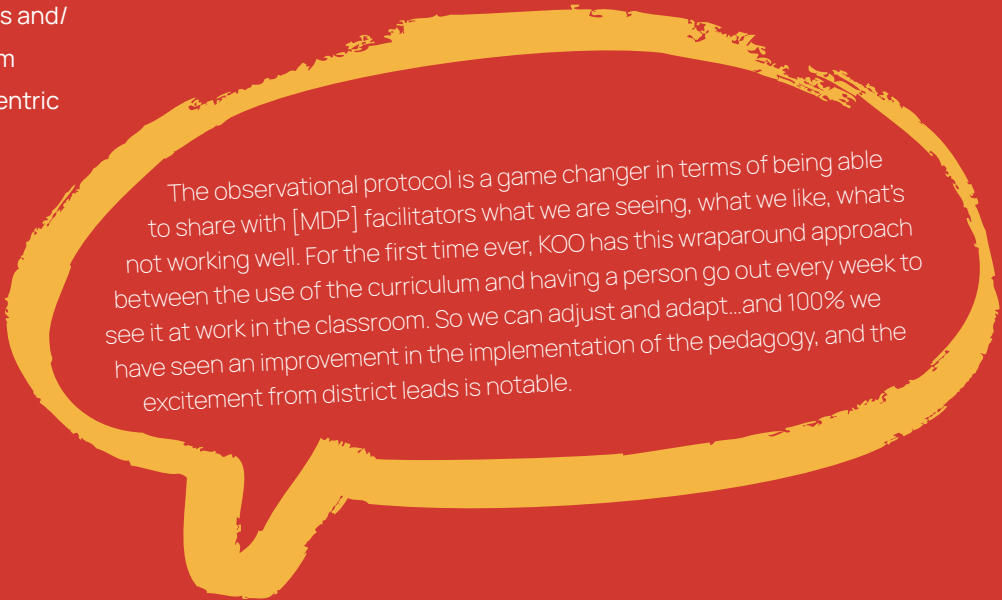
**In an express effort to counteract negative impact of the Eurocentric curriculum pervading American public education. “With students and families being asked to lose or deny their languages, literacies, cultures amd and histories in order to achieve in schools.” [Paris & Alim, 2017, p.1]**

KOO delivers curricula that centers the experiences, culture, and power of Black people, encouraging educators and students to tap their own transformative power. The heart of the KOO model is the Manhood Development Program (MDP). MDP classes are led by Black male educators trained in a curriculum custom-designed to engage, encourage, and empower Black males. The course focuses on African and African American history, social-emotional learning, character development, and social justice. Classes include units such as “The Emotional Character of Manhood,” “The Struggle for Liberation and Dignity,” and “The Black Male Image in American Media.” MDP’s culturally responsive teaching and content are designed to counter negative stereotypes and strengthen cultural identity.

This past year, among KOO’s greatest accomplishments under this driver is the implementation of an observational protocol to monitor fidelity and quality of MDP classes. The integration of this protocol into MDP has improved the quality of instruction. MDP facilitators receive substantive coaching to ensure an unprecedented level of excellence in curriculum delivery.

Other prominent achievements under the driver of culturally relevant pedagogy & curriculum include:

**MUSIC & VIDEO CURRICULUM:** KOO scholars have produced three original music albums: Kings in the Making, Revolution Remix, and Black Joy. Live and animated music videos were created for some of the album songs. Over the past year and a half, KOO has developed a set of secondary-level classroom lessons to accompany these artistic works, to help young people across the country channel their thoughts and feelings about the ongoing fight for racial justice. Each unit is designed to cover in 3-4 weeks, and includes direct instruction, discussion guides, and classroom activities. Working in collaboration with their peers, students emerge with: a clearer understanding of Black history, an appreciation for how Black folks have integrated into communities and transformed them, critical analysis of primary sources, and the ability to apply text (lyrics) to a social context. These lessons fit into social studies and/ or English Language Arts curriculum standards and align with an Afro-centric learning model.



The observational protocol is a game changer in terms of being able to share with [MDP] facilitators what we are seeing, what we like, what's not working well. For the first time ever, KOO has this wraparound approach between the use of the curriculum and having a person go out every week to see it at work in the classroom. So we can adjust and adapt...and 100% we have seen an improvement in the implementation of the pedagogy, and the excitement from district leads is notable.

**— BAAYAN BAKARI,**  
Khepera Curriculum Institute Founder

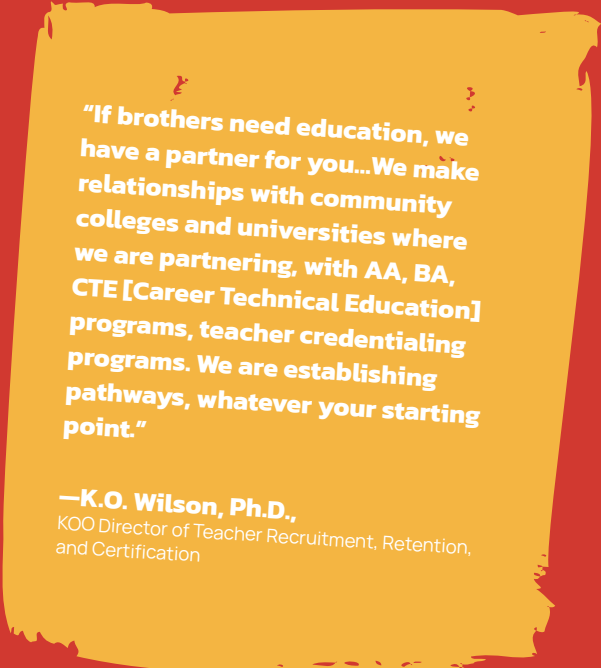
2) Black Male Teacher Recruitment Training And Retention

**KOO’s model for Black male teacher recruitment, training, and retention is multipronged. Our Professional Learning Community (PLC) cultivates a brotherhood of MDP facilitators across districts, to foster peer support, skill-development, and a sense of belonging within educational systems where Black men are significantly underrepresented. This year KOO made great strides in the areas of recruitment, college partnerships, and frameworks for retaining Black male teachers. We supported 32 teachers in our PLC and another 20 Black educators in the teacher pipeline who serve students.**

**RECRUITMENT EVENTS:** This year KOO initiated Black educator recruitment nights, targeting Black educators. We hosted a panel where Black educators shared stories of how they arrived in education, named the isolation many Black educators feel, discussed strategies to combat those feelings, and reviewed the technical requirements to become an educator. Turnout was excellent and the event was very well received, paving the way for similar events across the country.

**COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS:** KOO recognizes that Black men who have a love for young people, social-emotional skills, and a passion for recognizing the brilliance in every king are at all stages of their own education. While some may have a bachelor’s or graduate degree, others may be quite early in their educational journey. KOO works with colleges and universities in the cities where we have District Partners to ensure that every Black boy and man interested in becoming an educator can find his path. For example, KOO is collaborating with the University of Washington in Seattle to move prospective teachers through a credentialing process. In San Francisco we are working with CCSF’s Educator Rising program to expedite the process of obtaining an Associates of Arts (AA) degree and a teacher credential.

**FRAMEWORKS FOR TEACHER RETENTION:** KOO has conceived the Brotherhood of Love Development Framework (BOLD). BOLD assesses key performance indicators for Black male educators. We are building the capacity of District Partners to successfully recruit and retain Black men. We partner to support and nurture a high-quality loving brotherhood of Black male educators. Essential to nurturing brotherhood and preventing burnout is our reinforcement of Blackfulness – wellbeing grounded in the Black experience. We teach our PLC participants and district leaders to hold and cultivate Blackfulness for male educators.



**“If brothers need education, we have a partner for you...We make relationships with community colleges and universities where we are partnering, with AA, BA, CTE [Career Technical Education] programs, teacher credentialing programs. We are establishing pathways, whatever your starting point.”**

**—K.O. Wilson, Ph.D.,**  
KOO Director of Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Certification





### 3) Youth Voice & Leadership

**Centering Black boys means ensuring their voices are heard, and that Black youth have a seat at decision-making tables in education. Recent highlights include joining an intergenerational event at The Well in Washington D.C., and KOO's foray into youth participatory action research.**

**OPPORTUNITY-AGE YOUTH / CAREER & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:** KOO continued advancing youth engagement, leadership development, and media production to raise youth voice and facilitate leadership opportunities. We centered Black males and served all students by providing them with safe and supportive environments to share their voice and engage with peers. KOO trained nearly 20 Black opportunity-age youth develop their leadership skills and designing opportunities for peer mentorship, safe spaces, and skill acquisition. These leaders produced over 6 youth-led events including: The Lab technology conferences, KOO Kickoffs, and school engagement activities. They also produced over 10 podcasts of Breaking Bread and Cultural Crossroads where they interviewed professionals and community leaders.

**THE WELL:** KOO participated in a cross-generational convening of over 400 leaders across sectors in November of 2022 at The Well in Washington D.C., hosted by our partner New Profit. KOO youth were prominently featured in discussions on how to “reflect, renew, refund,” and co-design a vision for a stronger and healthier community.

**YPAR:** This year KOO partnered with the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) Hub at the University of California at Berkeley. YPAR is evaluation work in which youth act as co-facilitators of their own learning – this ensures that youth voice is meaningfully integrated into program analysis improvement. Through this partnership, MDP students and other KOO youth are able to provide direct feedback to adults in the school system. Students are seizing upon this opportunity to lovingly inform educators on the best ways to reach and teach them. The next step in the evolution of this work is to incorporate YPAR-involved youth and YPAR findings into teacher training programs and with KOO's college and university partners.

**“When I started with AAMA leadership council I was 12 years old. I got to speak with the district superintendent...There's a deficit, and it's not only in our city [Oakland]. We offer our voice. They never ask students, 'what do you need?' when they're developing curriculum.”**

**– Jonathan Piper II,**  
KOO Family Engagement Coordinator (and Former MDP Student)

### 4) Community & Family Engagement

**In many educational settings, Black families find a dearth of avenues for engagement, celebration, and authentic partnership in their children's learning and development. KOO fosters engagement with Black male students' families to ensure that they have strong networks to support for academic and life success. Highlights from this work include:**

**SPRING SYMPOSIUM:** March 2022 KOO held its annual Spring Symposium education conference, titled “Fill the Well: Essential Healing in Education.” At this online event we demonstrated our theory of change and overarching framework, Healing the Fish, while Treating the Toxic Ecosystem. We offered participants opportunities to connect with other educators driven by a shared commitment to engage, encourage, and empower Black Youth. We provide tools, resources and support systems to achieve classroom, school and district goals.

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS:** Over the past 18 months, KOO produced over 15 in-person events to orient families to our offerings and celebrate our accomplishments. At Black to School Nights we featured youth-produced music, videos, and animations for families in both Oakland and San Francisco. We are launching district-wide Family Nights with each of our District Partners where folks can gather across school sites to create fellowship, play games, watch movies, and break bread together. Family events are an important outreach strategy to raise awareness about MDP, TFI (The Fellowship Initiative), KOO Media Academy, scholarships, and internship opportunities. Another important dimension of all family engagement events is the collection of input from participant surveys – we use these to learn what families want and need from us and from their schools.

**LUNCHTIME JUMPOFFS:** KOO rolled out lunchtime outreach activities across campuses in Oakland, Antioch, Seattle, and San Francisco. At these pop-up events, we ignited school spirit, got students to connect with each other, organized games, held jump rope and dance exhibitions. A DJ played original music produced by KOO artists, and curate spaces to orient students to the KOO cultural identity.

**CROWNING CEREMONIES:** In Antioch, Oakland, San Francisco, and Seattle we launched a new annualized ritual to recognize the greatness of our kings. We held ceremonies to bestow a “crown” – a hat with the KOO crown logo upon each of our kings. There was drumming, food, drink, our trademark Man Up Pledge, and a discussion about the importance of cultural identity.

**FALL FORUM:** October 2022, KOO hosted our annual Fall Forum in Oakland, California. For the first time since the multiple pandemics hit our collective community, we were able to assemble in person. It was such a gift to experience the healing power of togetherness! Fall Forum attendees participated in virtual classroom observations and watched MDP in action. Attendees enjoyed youth performances, presentations by KOO opportunity-age youth, and a chance to network and celebrate our impact. A Kings in the Making conference accompanied the Fall Forum, where over 200 youth from 3rd-12th grade were invited to participate in person at Oakland High School - there was health and wellness workshops, food, fellowship, and the opportunity to learn the KOO philosophy and approach to celebrating the innate greatness of Black boys.

**STUDENT SHOWCASE:** We brought back our Student Showcase to align with our Spring Symposium as a project-based showcase of what students are learning with MDP classes. This amazing opportunity (event) brings students from our partner districts to present their knowledge creatively in front of families and community members.





## 5) Narrative change

**Far too pervasive in American culture are deficit-based narratives that fail to recognize the inherent beauty and intelligence of Black boys. KOO flips that narrative, curating content that celebrates Black male brilliance and achievement. During the past year-and-a-half we have grown tremendously in this area of work, particularly in terms of building capacity and infrastructure to facilitate multi-media production.**

**MUSIC:** This year, KOO released our third full music album, Black Joy (2022), adding to a body of work including Kings in the Making (2020), and The Revolution Remix (2021). All of these projects are comprised of original songs, written and produced by Black youth and young adults. The music communicates their truths, pain, triumphs, anger, hopes, and aspirations. Black Joy is a 10-song project, available on a variety of music platforms including Apple Music and YouTube.

**THE REVOLUTION REMIX FILM:** Within the past 18 months, KOO produced and distributed The Revolution Remix film, which evolved out of the music project by the same name. This is 26-minute film features youth-generated art, poetry, and music. The audience follows one of our kings through his day to day life. The film tells the story of the 2020 uprising resulting from George Floyd's murder, how Black youth and families reacted to it – turning a conversation of something tragic into something beautiful and profound. This film is a valuable addition to the KOO curriculum.



**PORTRAITS OF A KING:** Portraits of a King (POAK) is a docu-series of film shorts that spotlight kings. The series discusses how family, education, and the community have shaped them along their journey. Through an asset-based production methodology, the vignette-styled series provides intimate snapshots of kings in their pursuit of excellence. The short films provide engaging storytelling wherein kings discuss their obstacles and passions, which reveals their tenacity. These complex and compelling stories uniquely align with Kingmakers' values and mission to unapologetically elevate the beauty, brilliance, and innate greatness of Black boys. KOO is currently developing discussion guides to accompany POAK films. Separate guides are tailored to students, teachers, school staff, family and community members, to stimulate dialogue among a variety of stakeholders and audiences.

**PODCASTS:** KOO produced over 15 Breaking Bread and Cultural Crossroads podcasts to uncover and share the stories of influential Black professionals and community leaders. It is critical that these stories are excavated to provide a full and powerful account of influential people who are transforming education systems. We use this media to facilitate critical-thinking discussions with students.



**"This is music we can contribute to our partnerships with school districts – kings like to listen to music...and educators sometimes don't know what music to play...It's not just any kind of rap – it's about positivity, health, and knowledge."**

**– Josiah Harris,**  
KOO Board Member and former MDP Student

**KOO MEDIA ACADEMY:** The KOO Media Academy (KMA) is a direct service program that equips students ages 14-24 with media literacy skills: Writing, Audio, Lighting, Video, Photo, Journalism, Story Telling, Narrative Change, and Event Production. Young people can use these marketable skills to speak truth to power, earn money, and get exposure to career pathways. KMA utilizes a project-based curriculum where young people become innovative creators who learn how to

uncover and uplift empowering stories of inspiration hidden in our communities. While the dominant narrative reinforces narrow perspectives for Black males, our stories provide real life alternatives that clearly demonstrate the beauty, brilliance and benevolence we offer to the world.

KMA evolved from KOO's Street Team producing content in collaboration with the media team. Based on that experience, we created this stipended workforce and leadership development program where young people interested in storytelling learn an array of skills around broadcast journalism, podcasting, filmmaking, and other media production. Kings develop practical abilities and emerge prepared to enter the industry as young leaders who possess the knowledge and skills to change the narrative!

**PARTNERSHIP:** To maximize KOO's efforts to create a empowering narratives about Black boys and youth, we partner with cutting-edge media partners like Up 2 Code Media, History in the Making Entertainment, and VJTV. Up 2 Code is an Oakland-based Black-owned production house that lends its expertise to facilitate production and distribution of KOO's growing collection of media projects. History in the Making Entertainment, led by Ramasses Head, is a production company that has supported KOO's event production, promotional videos and podcast production. VJTV, The Visual Radio Network, is a Black-owned platform where entertainers, producers, designers, and businesses gain exposure and media proficiencies. Each partner is essential for KOO telling impactful stories and reaching wider audiences.







## 6) Policy change

**District and school policies are often written in ways that exacerbate systemic inequities that have a disproportionately negative impact on Black male students. KOO works with District Partners to help them revise school policies to embrace targeted universalism, prioritize equity, and reverse discriminatory practices and policies.**

**TARGETED UNIVERSALISM:** When a district partners with KOO they establish MDP classes, which exemplify the Targeted Universalism philosophy. Targeted Universalism (TU) (a term coined by University of California, Berkeley scholar John A. Powell) means using targeted strategies that reach universal goals. A TU approach prioritizes those furthest from opportunity, recognizing that an institution must improve its practices to reach those furthest from opportunity. In terms of policy, often after instituting MDP, a “bottom-up” effect occurs, where school districts recognize the value of our theory of change and name TU as a key strategy, which can officially pass a Board Policy for Equity. KOO advances this work by convening district leaders along with school-based personnel, parents, and students from each participating district. They form multi-racial inter-generational cross-functional district (MIC) teams that participate in our Learning Collaborative (LC). Districts further along in policy revision have the ability and space in our LC to support newer districts to overcome challenges and create lasting change.

**ASSET-BASED MEASURES:** Traditional measures of “success” in an educational environment typically stop at attendance, behavior, and courses (ABCs). But KOO believes firmly that as long as Black boys are entrenched in an educational system that is not designed for their success, these measures are inadequate to demonstrate their growth. We advocate for asset-based measures that intentionally mark progress on the targets of student-centered education. KOO encourages districts to put in place policies and mechanisms for measuring student self-efficacy, cultural identity, belonging, and connection. This approach is supported by a study conducted by the University of Washington. All partner districts are moving in this direction, but Seattle Public Schools is at the forefront, reconsidering how they measure student success.






**IT'S WELL PAST TIME TO CREATE  
AN EDUCATION SYSTEM WHERE  
EVERY STUDENT, PARTICULARLY  
BLACK BOYS, FEEL LOVED,  
RESPECTED AND VALUED**







"We are excited to give kings a community through TFI and give them a chance to feel connected to people outside of their homes, their schools, and their campuses. Creating that brotherhood and network of Black and Brown kings who want to do good things with their lives and give them space to make mistakes and grow because sometimes high school is not the best place for that. Being able to create that space through Kingmakers is really special. It's a way to go beyond the district level work to take action toward the mission."

— OBASI DAVIS,  
Program Manager, TFI Oakland

## The Fellowship Initiative

**Oakland is one of five cities (Chicago, Dallas, New York, Los Angeles, Oakland) implementing The Fellowship Initiative (TFI) – a JP Morgan Chase developed program. KOO is the lead agency for Oakland’s TFI program. Our TFI program provides academic support, leadership development, and African-centered curriculum to young men of color. The three-year program addresses three primary college readiness issues often faced by Black and Latino youth:**

(1) access to rigorous college preparatory courses, (2) access to experienced teachers who have high levels of cultural competencies for working with boys and men of color, and (3) access to consistent guidance counseling to continually track students’ academic performance and college application process. TFI participants commence in 10th grade and continue through their senior year, three Saturdays a month.

This year KOO has supported 32 kings with academic advising, tutoring, literacy and reading comprehension, financial literacy mentorship, and career and professional development. The program hosted 15 TFI kings on an Outward Bound excursion. Youth reported that the experience was transformative and life-altering, helping them get in touch with their potential as leaders. The program also facilitated a California college tour of 13 campuses across California. This experience reinvigorated participants’ passion for their education, renewed their commitment to the TFI process, and got them back on track after the virtually learning challenges of Covid-19 policies.

At the end of the 2022 calendar year, 100% of the participants are on track to graduate and 100% have applied to college (most to 4-year institutions). TFI Oakland is currently recruiting its next cohort of rising 10th graders.



# INTERNAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

**This year KOO invested in internal systems and structures to ensure our house is sturdy. Too often, fledgling organizations are so focused on forward motion that they fail to appreciate the importance of maintaining a healthy institution. Pausing to build internal systems for healthy functioning is like self-care at the organizational level. Two of the most important aspects of what KOO accomplished this year are establishing the KOO Culture Collective (KCC) and adopting a Results Based Accountability (RBA) data framework.**

## KOO Culture Collective

This year, as we experienced such rapid growth as an organization, we recognized the need to intentionally devise a set of KOO rituals, routines and mindsets by which to induct, socialize, train and retain new staff. We put in place the KCC to ensure that every team member learns the KOO philosophy. This way new members will feel safe to embody the work according to their own strengths, align their personal and professional goals, and embrace being a part of the KOO family. Through KCC, we cultivate a sense of belonging while maintaining clarity and consistency in our systems, vision, and values.

## Results-Based Accountability Framework

KOO's 2022 Fall Forum was titled "DREAM: Data Rules Everything Around Me". This was fitting as we adopted a RBA framework to monitor, evaluate and improve our service quality and client impact. Developed by Mark Friedman, RBA is a way for organizations, programs, and communities to collect and use data to facilitate data-informed decision-making and accountability. This year we developed metrics and methods of measurement on three levels of KOO impact: Systems, Adults, and Students. At each level we ask the three essential RBA questions: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?

### SYSTEMS

Ensure K-12 systems have healthy ecological environments (macro/micro systems, structures, culture, conditions) to ensure Black boys thrive

### ADULTS

Ensure adults engage, encourage, and empower Black boys using asset-based practices and approaches

### STUDENTS

Ensure all Black boys graduate from high school college-, career-, and community-ready; equipped for 21st Century workforce



# GOVERNANCE & INSPIRATION

Message from Board of Directors Co-Chairs

**Reflecting upon the past eighteen months, we want to recognize KOO's exponential growth. In only our first year-and-a-half as a fully independent nonprofit, the organization accomplished much:**

- We surpassed fiscal goals, allowing KOO to build our infrastructure, plan courageously, and innovate.
- We purchased a building, a site and structure that will serve as a hub and lab for the work locally and nationally.
- We joined with the family of KOO ancestor, Jean Yonemura Wing, to provide scholarships to KOO alumni and pay tribute to her vision.
- We expanded our work into the American South with the addition of Gwinnett County Public Schools as a District Partners.
- We added new staff and elevated people into new roles to ensure the agency can rise to the demands of growth.

We strengthened the organizations health and our obligation to the core principle of self-care. In recognition that these are challenging times, and that KOO staff are doing intimate, transformative, and sometimes emotionally exhausting work, we ensured that all staff received cash bonuses this year. We formed a partnership with LifeWorks Employee Assistance Program to ensure all staff and their families can access mental, financial, physical, and emotional wellbeing support.

Such fast paced expansion might destabilize some fledgling organizations, but not KOO. Kingmakers of Oakland has become ever more stable and robust during this time of rapid building. We believe that the ideological commitment across all levels of KOO and within all partner relationships is what allows KOO to remain balanced and faithful to its values and vision, in the face of both hardship and opportunity.

As a Board, we strategically and actively reflect upon our own cultural norms: how we onboard new members, build community, and emblemize an egalitarian ethos in governing. One of the things that makes this organization extraordinary is intentional intergenerational partnerships. The KOO philosophy, that elders and youth both offer invaluable insight and should learn from one another, is embodied not only in KOO programs and partnerships, but in how the Board functions. Approximately 40% of KOO Board members are opportunity-age kings who grew up in MDP, and every one of our Board officer positions is co-led by a young person in partnership with an elder. This commitment to honor youth perspectives and revere the acumen of elders infuses all KOO work, at the district level, classroom level, individual level, and within the Board. It also shows that KOO youth not only want to stay connected to the work, they want to lead and meet the challenge of guiding the future of this multi-million dollar organization. This is the epitomization of the KOO tenet of kings raising kings.

The foundation of KOO's work is storytelling. As a Board, we are intentional about how we use our stories to strengthen community. As we look forward to the future, we listen, lean into, and learn from the cultural creators of this next generation. Black Joy, both the concept and the music, serves as our anthem, providing the soundtrack to our freedom dreams and ultimate liberation.

We will all be ancestors one day. May we honor our work in the present as we work for the future. Another school system is possible.



Vajra Watson

George Hofstetter





# BOARD MEMBERS

KOO staff and community gratefully acknowledge the service and leadership of our Board of Directors. Our Board members embody passion and commitment as ambassadors for KOO’s mission and vision. Representing different perspectives and life experiences, every member contributes unique value to the organization, enriching what KOO has to offer and helping build a more beautiful future for Black boys and men.

Romero Wesson

Eliza Greenberg

Darren Isom

Josiah Harris

Christopher Chatmon

Vajra Watson


George Hofstetter

Darlene Flynn

Rickey Jackson





The background is a photograph of four people (three men and one woman) smiling and standing together. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent red overlay. There are several white, hand-drawn style arrows pointing downwards from the top left towards the text. A large, white, hand-drawn checkmark is on the right side, and a white brushstroke is at the bottom right.

**THIS WORK IS  
AMBITIOUS, URGENT  
AND ACHIEVABLE,  
WHEN WE WORK  
TOGETHER**





We are forever indebted [to Jean] – she took her last breath fighting for black voice, for equity, for a sense of belonging, a chance to believe. From that moment we opened up a portal so people who loved Jean could donate and start a scholarship fund...So far we've awarded between 5-6 kings between 2020 and now...We are looking for kings who want to give back and have a goal...[who have a] dream and can connect that back to Jean's work.

**– JOSIAH HARRIS,**  
KOO Board Member and Jean Yonemura Wing  
Memorial Scholarship Fund Committee Member

# JEAN YONEMURA WING

## Life's Work and Legacy

**This year KOO established a scholarship fund to honor the legacy of Dr. Jean Yonemura Wing. Jean was a pioneer in the use of data to drive social change and racial justice in education.**

In 2006, she co-edited *Unfinished Business: Closing the Racial Achievement Gap in Our Schools* with Pedro A. Noguera (Jossey-Bass 2006). Later she and her husband, Butch Wing, worked with the Reverend Jesse Jackson to help found the Rainbow PUSH Coalition. For 16 years she headed Oakland Unified School District's Research Assessment and Data department, where she built an extensive data infrastructure that would usher OUSD into an era of data-driven decision-making. For the first time ever, OUSD leaders, staff, families, and students had access to data dashboards that could be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, Special Education status, school, grade level, and other factors. Through transparency and accountability, these data dashboards continue to empower advocates to push for equity.

After retiring from OUSD in June 2020, Jean began devoting her time to KOO. She helped build our capacity to collect and utilize data in a way that honors the perspectives of our kings. She was in the midst of this work when she died, in March of this year, far too soon.

In consultation with her surviving family, KOO identified a way to honor her commitment to our work and to educational opportunity for Black boys. We launched the Jean Yonemura Wing Memorial Scholarship Fund at the end of 2021. Annually, the fund grants two to four kings a \$5,000 award to be applied to their higher education pursuits. Applicants must have a connection to KOO, as MDP students, former MDP students, interns, or artists, and demonstrate a desire to help fulfill Jean's vision of a more just and equitable world. The fund has already helped 6 kings to realize their higher education potential.





# FORECAST FOR THE FUTURE

**KOO has many projects on the horizon, all extending from the infrastructure and foundation-building we have accomplished this year in the areas of narrative change, teacher training, and culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum.**

## KOO Labs

This past year KOO purchased the old Zoo Labs building located in West Oakland. This year KOO will complete reconstruction and unveil KOO Labs as a design center and production house where young people can gather, imagine, and create. Whether their passion lies in music, art, videography, social movement building, or entrepreneurship; kings will find at KOO labs a place where they can develop their skills and explore different dimensions of themselves. We expect the completion of KOO Labs to bolster the community by providing an in-person spot to convene, produce, and rejoice.

## Storytelling and Podcasting

"Lift every voice" KOO is poised to produce regular podcasts featuring voices from kings across all our partner districts. To maximize our capacity to capture those voices we are developing a mobile media academy which will enable us to go to campuses and amplify the perspectives and experiences of kings across a wide age-range. There is no more effective way to demonstrate our impact than to create outlets for kings to tell their own stories.

## Teacher Training (beyond MDP)

KOO has refined a pedagogy that truly engages, encourages, and empowers Black boys and youth. Our MDP facilitators embody that approach and change lives everyday. But most Black boys and young men, even those in MPD classes, will spend the majority of their educational career being taught by people who are neither Black, nor male, nor educated in the principles of true cultural relevance. To help address this reality, KOO is working

on a training program beyond MDP facilitators. Teachers may earn certification in KOO's 12 pedagogical practices, learning the techniques that help us work so effectively with Black male students. This work will be a focal point for the upcoming year, and may eventually expand to credit-bearing courses with university affiliates and single-subject credential endorsements.

## K-12 Curriculum

An eventual goal is to develop a comprehensive K-12 KOO curriculum that will serve as an alternative to Eurocentric curricula that currently dominate educational systems. Our current curriculum covers history and literature, but American education needs a complete overhaul. Every subject, including science, math, social studies, language arts, etc., should be taught in a way that empowers Black children and youth, who traditionally experience a greater degree of administrative hostility and push-out. We are excited to develop this and roll it out as an addition to the KOO suite of strategies to transform education.

## Impact Targets

As KOO concludes its first 18 months as a fully-independent 501©3 organization, we take stock of the work that we have been entrusted to do. All of us at KOO feel honored and privileged to work in service of the inherent beauty and brilliance of Black boys. Our ambition is nothing short of a complete reconstruction of educational assumptions, beliefs, and practices, so that Black boys are set up to shine, achieve, and live their best lives. All KOO supporters, be they financial, fiduciary, or spiritual, form the community that makes this work possible.





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THANK  
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**— KINGMAKERS"  
OF OAKLAND —**



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