

**OAKLAND, CA**  
**Mayor Libby Schaaf**

## **The Oakland Promise**

Completing post-secondary education – an associate or undergraduate degree, or career technical education certificate – has tremendous impact on earning power, upward mobility, and health. Low-income children are five times more likely to move up the income ladder as adults if they achieve a college degree. However, in Oakland, out of 100 students that start 9th grade, only 10 will complete college five years after high school graduation.

The Oakland Promise seeks to change this reality. It is a Cradle-to-Career initiative, launched by the Mayor's Office in partnership with the Oakland Unified School District, East Bay College Fund, the Oakland Public Education Fund, and over 30 implementation partners including hospitals, community organizations, and colleges. The initiative weaves together best practices from across the country in a comprehensive way to ensure all children are supported, cradle to career. The vision is that every child in Oakland graduates from high school with the expectations, resources, and skills to complete college and be successful in the career of his or her choice. The goal is to dramatically increase the number of college graduates from Oakland within a decade and instill a sense of hope and expectation that all children are college-bound.

The Oakland Promise provides support systems and resources to children and families at key transition points – birth, kindergarten, middle school, high school, and college. Research shows that children from low-income backgrounds with \$500, or even less, in a college savings account are three times more likely to attend college and four times more likely to graduate. The Oakland Promise connects financial support through various college savings mechanisms with social and emotional support to ensure that college completion and career success is the expectation and achievable to all students, regardless of background.

The Oakland Promise combines several strategies in its comprehensive cradle-to-career continuum:

- The Brilliant Baby program seeks to support the healthy development of babies born into poverty by improving parents' financial capability, economic well-being and optimism about their baby's bright future. Supporting parents and guardians in this way reduces parental stress and depression, encourages positive parenting behaviors, and, as result, improves the health and education outcomes of their children. Beginning implementation in July 2017, Brilliant Baby includes two core strategies: College Savings Accounts seeded with \$500 established for babies in their first year of life, serving as a concrete reminder to parents of their baby's bright future; and a Financial Coaching Program for parents and guardians that includes both small group and one-on-one coaching and up to an additional \$500 in savings incentives and participation awards.
- Kindergarten to College (K2C) is a universal program for all kindergarten students attending an Oakland public school that sets college as an expectation for all. The focus is to create a college-going culture in elementary schools, reinforcing the message to children that they are all capable of academic and career success, and that their families and community support their efforts towards those goals. K2C provides an early college scholarship of \$100 to every student, supports teachers and school leaders to promote a college-bound identity for all students, and provides families technical assistance to open their own 529 College Savings Accounts, offering up to \$100 in incentives as families open accounts and save consistently for six months. The program is currently at 52 elementary schools

- Future Centers are college and career hubs on middle and high school campuses that provide college application and scholarship support, technology, and access to internships, setting students on the path to college and career success. The Oakland Promise works with the East Bay College Fund, Oakland Unified School District, and other key community partners to bring high quality professionals to the Future Centers that align and coordinate to provide students with personalized supports. The vision is that all middle and high school students will receive college and career access support. Future Centers currently operate at 6 sites.
- The Oakland Promise provides the financial and social/emotional supports needed to ensure students graduate college and are ready for success in a career of their choice. Through its lead agency, East Bay College Fund (EBCF), direct multi-year scholarships are awarded to hundreds of students each year to make college affordable. Partnerships with local colleges also generate additional financial support for students, and coordination with other financial aid and scholarship providers will ensure students are supported equitably to complete college. Finally, each scholarship is paired with persistence support to ensure that the social and emotional needs of students are met and that they have the holistic support they need to graduate. Support includes: one-to-one mentors, peer support, retreats, partnerships with two- and four-year colleges, and more. EBCF is well positioned to lead this work with a 13-year history of providing this support to students; their college graduation rate is 80 percent, which is four times the national average for students with low-income backgrounds.

The Oakland Promise combines best practices from across the country in an expansive way, working across the City, County, Oakland Unified School District and multiple nonprofit organizations. In order to ensure alignment, collective impact, and long-term sustainability, its systems change work supports coordination, communication, community engagement, sustainability, constituency and partner development activities. Together, these core functions make The Oakland Promise programs and supporting initiatives a unified, city-wide force for change. Progress toward the initiative's goal of dramatically increasing the number of college graduates within a decade is seen in the following performance data.

#### Brilliant Baby

- 350-plus babies secured a \$500 College Savings Account;
- 65 percent of families participated in Financial Coaching;
- 80 percent of Brilliant Baby parents believe their child is college-bound.

#### Kindergarten to College

- 52 elementary schools implemented K2C;
- 4,300 students awarded early college scholarships;
- 300-plus K2C families opened a college savings account;
- 120 families participated in financial literacy workshops.

#### Future Centers

- 90 percent FAFSA/Dream App completion for 2016-17 Seniors;
- 88 percent of program's seniors reported applying to at least one college;
- 77 percent of program's 2016 seniors enrolled in college directly after graduating
- From external evaluation, University of Chicago's NORC: For the 2015-2016 senior class in program schools, there was a 7 percentage-point increase in students enrolling in any college or university (two-year or four-year) in the fall after their senior year; rates were flat at comparison schools. This included gains of 11 percentage points for Latin students. For African American students in program

schools, enrollment in four-year colleges increased by 14 percentage points; rates were flat at comparison schools.

#### College Scholarships and Completion

- Over 1,000 Oakland Promise students in college with scholarships and persistence supports through East Bay College Fund;
- \$8.5 million in cumulative multi-year scholarships awarded;
- 90 percent-plus first-year completion rate for program senior class of 2016;
- 500-plus mentors recruited and provided to Oakland Promise college students.

As of January 2019, Oakland Promise has secured over \$61 million: \$33 million for its initial pilot and \$28 million for a Generation Fund Quasi-Endowment that will enable the initiative to serve a generation of students and families (annual program operating costs not included).

*Additional information on The Oakland Promise is available from the Office of Mayor Libby Schaaf: David Silver, Director of Education, at [dsilver@oaklandca.gov](mailto:dsilver@oaklandca.gov) or 510-393-4888, or Kyra Mungia, Education Project Director, at [kmungia@oaklandca.gov](mailto:kmungia@oaklandca.gov) or 510-238-3990. Information is also available from Maggie Croushore, the Oakland Promise Director of Operations, at [maggie@oaklandpromise.org](mailto:maggie@oaklandpromise.org) or 708-227-3979.*