

West Oakland Culture Keepers Project and Oakland Youth Movement Youth Development Collaborative Project

Culture Keepers Project

Since 2007, the Alameda Health Cares Services Agency, through Interagency Children's Policy Council (ICPC), has funded the implementation of Culture Keepers Project at Hoover Elementary School in West Oakland. One hundred (100) students have been served since the beginning of the 2007 school year.

Culture Keepers, an innovative cascading mentorship model, utilizes McClymonds High School students to serve as mentors for Hoover Elementary students. The project has proven successful in addressing behavioral issues through a diversion strategy that offers alternatives to suspension and expulsion. The High School student mentors provide pro-social recreational activities and academic supports that enable the Elementary students to stay focused and fully engaged in academic learning. The project results indicate positive influences for the classroom environment and school culture.

Oakland Youth Movement

Oakland Youth Movement (OYM) is the youth-led, grassroots component of the City/County Neighborhood Initiative (CCNI). The goal of CCNI is to build community capacity among neighborhood residents with support and partnership of the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD), the City of Oakland and residents of Sobrante Park in the East, and the Hoover Historic District in the West. OYM formed in 2006 when two youth groups, HYPE (Healing Youth with Positive Energy) based in West Oakland, and "It's On YOU" (Youth with One Understanding) based in East Oakland's Sobrante Park, were brought together by ACPHD and the City of Oakland to assess youth concerns in their respective neighborhoods..

OYM incorporates skill development, community organizing strategies, and specialized Participatory Action Research (PAR) training to support youth in becoming more effective agents for positive change in their communities. OYM youth are ages 12 to 24. OYM participants receive a small stipend for their participation.

The Collaborative Partnerships

The collaboration between OYM and the Culture Keepers Project allows for the creation of quantitative and qualitative benchmarks to measure the impact of youth-to-youth mentoring on the Hoover Elementary School environment including students and their families, teachers, and administrators. OYM members' ability to conduct PAR—instrument development, data collection, analysis, and dissemination—bring a much needed resource to the Hoover School community. Moreover, the PAR methodology and the potential interpretations of findings, are bolstered by an experiential understanding of the socio-economic realities of the communities OYM participants grew up in—West Oakland and Sobrante Park.

Oakland Youth Movement has a pre-existing mandate to act upon its' West Oakland youth survey findings from 2007. The findings call for the integration of positive youth development and violence prevention methodologies in place-based, pro-social educational and recreational programs. The Culture Keepers mentoring framework fits perfectly within OYM's mandate. Thus, it was agreed to collaborate with the goal to broaden the West Oakland youth development effort with the inclusion of Hoover Elementary school-based services.

Concept

The Interagency Children’s Policy Council (ICPC) provides contractual oversight to the Culture Keeper Project. ICPC also provides program planning in partnership with the Alameda County Public Health Department (PHD), the Community Assessment Planning Education & Evaluation (CAPE) Unit and CCNI staff to support the Hoover Elementary School Principal and Culture Keepers Coordinator.

The following proposed concept design reflects that OYM will have three youth leaders assigned to Culture Keeper Project. One (1) a youth leader will provide administrative support to the CK Coordinator and serves as a liaison between the student mentors and the McClymonds High School site. The remaining two (2) youth leaders will support the Culture Keeper program evaluation by participating in the design planning, coordination, survey administration, analysis, and presentation.

