Oakland’s Achievement Gap Is Large and Growing

The Education Equality Index Shows Only Two of 10 Students from Low-Income Families in Oakland Attend Schools That Are Closing the Achievement Gap

OAKLAND, Calif. — According to the Education Equality Index (EEI), a first-of-its-kind tool released today, students from Oakland’s low-income families are far less likely to attend schools that provide equal educational opportunities than those in a majority of American cities. Only two in 10 students from low-income families in Oakland attend schools that are closing the achievement gap.

“Every child in Oakland, regardless of zip code or family background, deserves access to a great school and a quality education,” said Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. “I’m proud of the work being done at the Oakland schools that have narrowed and even closed the achievement gap. I remain committed to working with Oakland Unified Superintendent Wilson and educators across the city through combined efforts like the Oakland Promise to help ensure all of our students have the opportunity to live up to their full potential.”

Alarmingly, the gap in Oakland grew by 11 percent between 2011 and 2013 – a pace quicker than 80 percent of major U.S. cities. Oakland’s achievement gap is larger than half of California’s largest cities, including San Francisco, San Jose, and San Diego.

“These results affirm why we are pushing with a sense of urgency to make real change on behalf of our mostly lower income, minority students who are not receiving the education they deserve,” said Antwan Wilson, Superintendent of Oakland Unified School District. “We can build on the examples of district-run schools such as Lincoln Elementary, Cleveland Elementary and Think College Now, and foster greater achievement and equity among our many charter schools. The way to do this is by collaboration and innovation across all of our public schools.”

Statewide, California’s achievement gap is smaller than 15 of the 35 states for which data is available, and boasts two of the nation’s ten cities with the smallest achievement gaps — in Irvine and San Francisco.

The Education Equality Index is the first national comparative measure of the achievement gap at the school, city and state levels, and identifies the regions where children from low-income communities are most likely to attend schools with small or nonexistent achievement gaps. Funded by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and developed in partnership by the foundation, Education Cities and GreatSchools, the EEI features school, city and state-level data covering the nation’s 100 biggest cities in 35 states.

The Education Equality Index also identifies the top 10 schools in Oakland with small or nonexistent achievement gaps that serve a student population where the majority are from low-income families. Cleveland Elementary School is one school included in that list.
“We are honored to be recognized as a school that has closed the achievement gap and are very excited for our students’ success,” said Cleveland Elementary School Principal Peter Van Tassel. “While we all know that there is a long way to go, this new data shows what can be done when a community rallies around best practices and works together to provide the support and challenges that all students deserve.”

**Key findings from the Education Equality Index include:**

- Oakland earns an EEI score of 33.2, indicating it is home to an achievement gap that is bigger than 50 percent of major U.S. cities.
- Alarmingly, Oakland’s achievement gap grew by 11 percent between 2011 and 2013, a quicker pace than 80 percent of major U.S. cities.
- Students from low-income families in San Francisco and San Jose are more likely to attend schools that help them achieve at similar levels as their more advantaged peers than those in Oakland.
- California receives an EEI score of 36.7, which is smaller than 25 out of 35 states for which data is available.
- California has 22 cities that are among the largest 100 in the US by census population. Irvine (EEI score of 55.3) and San Francisco (51.1) have the smallest achievement gaps in the state, and the 5th and 6th smallest achievement gaps in the nation, respectively.
- Out of California’s 22 largest cities, the achievement gap only narrowed in nine cities between 2011 and 2013.

**The top 10 Oakland schools with small or nonexistent achievement gaps that serve a student population where the majority are from low-income families are:**

- American Indian Public Charter School
- American Indian Public High School
- Cleveland Elementary School
- Conservatory of Vocal/Instrumental Arts School
- KIPP Bridge Charter School
- Lighthouse Community Charter High School
- Lincoln Elementary School
- Oakland Charter Academy
- Oakland Charter High School
- Think College Now School

As detailed in the EEI, there are hundreds of schools across the nation where low-income students are achieving at levels that match or even exceed their more advantaged peers — proving that all children can excel in school when given the opportunity.

“Equality of opportunity is an American ideal,” said Ethan Gray, founder and CEO of Education Cities. “The Education Equality Index shows that while we, as a nation, have a long way to go to ensure our most vulnerable children have the opportunities they need to thrive, there are schools in almost every city proving that equality is possible.”

This is the first in a series of releases intended to identify the practices that are closing the achievement gap at the quickest pace. To see more data from the Education Equality Index and use the interactive online tool, visit [www.educationequalityindex.org](http://www.educationequalityindex.org).
About Education Cities
Education Cities is a non-profit organization that convenes, advises, and supports a network of cities in their efforts to increase the number of great public schools. Learn more at www.education-cities.org.

About GreatSchools
Founded in 1998, GreatSchools is a national, nonpartisan nonprofit helping millions of parents find high-quality schools, support great learning, and guide their kids to great futures. GreatSchools offers thousands of articles, videos, and worksheets to help parents support their children’s learning. Last year, GreatSchools had more than 56 million unique visitors, including more than half of all U.S. families with school-age children. Headquartered in Oakland, California, GreatSchools partners with cities and states across the country to promote access to school quality data to families, particularly those in high need. Through its GreatKids program, GreatSchools promotes parenting for education success and teacher-parent collaboration.

About the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation
The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of children living in urban poverty around the world. Headquartered in Austin, TX with satellite offices in New Delhi, India and Cape Town, South Africa, the Dell family foundation funds programs that foster high-quality public education and childhood wellness, and improve the economic stability of families living in poverty. The foundation has committed more than $1.2 billion to global children's issues and community initiatives to date. Learn more at www.msdf.org.

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