



Getting Down to **FACTS**



Imagining the Educational Futures for Black Children in California

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May 2026



Stanford | SCALE Initiative
Accelerator for Learning

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Acknowledgements

We humbly thank colleagues at the Transformative Justice in Education Center at the University of California, Davis; Stanford Accelerator for Learning's Equity in Learning Initiative; Futuring for Equity Lab, Stanford Graduate School of Education; and Institute for the Future in Palo Alto, California for their support.

Introduction

This report captures recent data collected from Black parents navigating their children’s educational experiences in public, charter, private, and independent school settings in California. Our aim is to provide policymakers and education leaders with insight regarding how Black parents define education and envision their children’s educational futures. Data and learnings herein are drawn from two research initiatives: (1) the Black Parent Survey Project, an initiative of the Transformative Justice in Education Center at the University of California, Davis (PI: Lawrence T. Winn); and (2) the Educational Futures of Black Children in California Study, an ongoing collaboration between the Stanford Accelerator for Learning’s Equity in Learning Initiative, Futuring for Equity Lab at the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University (PI: Maisha T. Winn).

Through focus group interviews with families who participated in the Black Parent Survey Project and data collected from a series of Educational Futures for Black Children foresight workshops with Black families in Northern California, we explored the following questions:

1. How do Black parents conceptualize education? How do their definitions and conceptualizations of education map onto experiences with their children’s schools and educators?
2. What kinds of educational futures are Black families dreaming about? What can educators and policymakers learn from these families to expand and inform their ideas for schools and education in California?

Additional questions beyond the scope of this report included: What do parents of African American children in California want for their children’s education? How do they imagine and envision their children’s educational futures?

Context

Black children’s educational futures are under increasing threat due to a range of national developments, including calls to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education, the rising cost of college, school closures in urban communities, a deepening shortage of qualified teachers, inequitable access

to technology and AI-driven learning, and efforts to eliminate diversity initiatives, culturally responsive teaching, and affirmative action at all levels of education.

In California, the landscape for Black families has shifted significantly since 2000. According to the *State of Black California*, in 2020 Black residents numbered 2,119,286 out of the state's 37.7 million people. While the statewide percentage declined from 6.6% in 2000 to 5.6% in 2020, Black populations grew in the Inland Empire and Sacramento, reflecting the emergence of new centers of community life. At the same time, gentrification and rising housing costs have displaced many Black families from historic urban neighborhoods, reshaping the state's cultural and educational landscape and altering access to community-rooted schools and support systems.

Despite these demographic shifts and move to more affordable and safer communities, Black students continue to face persistent inequities in schooling. Research shows disproportionately high suspension rates compared to their white peers, a pattern documented in *Beyond Suspension Decline*, a five-year qualitative study examining efforts across California to move away from punitive and exclusionary discipline. Additional data underscore ongoing disparities:

- Black students are suspended at notably higher rates than their peers, with the highest suspension rates in Sacramento County, Contra Costa County, and Los Angeles County (Wood et al., 2018).
- Black teachers comprise less than 3% of California's teaching workforce (California Department of Education; National Center for Education Statistics, 2023).
- Enrollment of Black students in California public schools declined by 47% from 2003 to 2023 (Whitaker & Nelson, 2024).

In 2024, UCLA's Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies published *The State of Black California: Assessing 20 Years of Black Progress in the Golden State*, for the California Black Legislative Caucus, showing that Black students have made progress in meeting eligibility requirements for the California State University and University of California systems, with increased completion of the required coursework. Even so, at this pace it will take approximately 248 years to close the racial equality gap between Black and White communities.

Parents and their children are mobilizing to ensure that Black students' educational futures are neither overlooked nor marginalized. Across California, families are organizing and partnering with community-based advocacy groups such as the Sacramento Black Parallel School Board, Parents of African American Children in Contra Costa County, the African American Parent Advisory Council in San Francisco, and Families in Action in Oakland. In Southern California there is CADRE in South L.A. schools; the Black Parent Network in L.A county; the Council of African American Parents (CAAP); Parents for Liberation, and BlackECE. These parents and students demand equitable resources, culturally affirming learning environments, and accountability for improved educational outcomes.

Data Collection Process and Methods

Our first dataset draws from the Black Parent Survey Project (BPSP), a mixed-methods study that combines survey data with in-depth conversations with parents. The project includes three phases: (1) a survey, (2) focus groups, and (3) community collaboration sessions. The survey was developed with support from the University of Wisconsin Survey Research Center (UWSRC) and was offered in both paper and online formats. To recruit participants, we partnered with national and local organizations that support Black families and shared information about the study at community events. Parents in California who completed the survey were also invited to participate in focus groups to follow up on reflections on the project—and discovered that: parents had come to learn strategies for navigating schools, educators, and school leaders; and these focus groups were a valued space/site of support, as parents shared harmful and discouraging experiences with their children's schools/schooling in vulnerable ways. Across five Black Parent Survey Project focus groups conducted between February and May 2021, 19 parents shared their perspectives and experiences. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed using discourse analysis task questions, to deepen our understanding of stakeholders' values (Gee, 2014).

Our second dataset comes from an Educational Futures of Black Children pilot workshop that was part of a larger social design experiment, "Families as Futurists," exploring the future of education with Black families and supporting them with space, tools, and resources to plan for their children's educational futures. Cofacilitated by members of our research team on May 6, 2023 in Sacramento,

California,¹ the pilot workshop introduced 10 families with middle- through high- school-aged students to foresight tools adapted from the Institute for the Future.

Parents and students were nominated by local teachers and community members and were also recruited through school-based Black Student Unions and affinity groups. It is important to note that in some cases there were parents, grandparents, or mentors as we wanted the key figure who supported the young person’s education trajectory. Workshop activities, large group discussions, and smaller group discussions were video recorded. With social design experimentation, the method “strives to be...part of the process of fundamental social transformation” with participants “becoming designers of their own futures” (Gutierrez & Jurow, 2016). This work seeks to put these tools into the hands of families who need them the most. Since the pilot, our team has facilitated two additional workshops in the Bay Area that included families from the pilot and 7 additional families. The Bay Area workshops took place in the spring 2020 and the fall 2020 and attracted families with early college students as well as middle school and high school. Another note about the Bay Area workshops is that families who identified as Central American and Tongan American joined the workshop. Plans for future experiment expansion to Southern California and other states are beginning to take shape.

Across both datasets, students attended a wide range of school settings, including large comprehensive public high schools in urban and suburban communities, predominantly White and affluent private independent K–12 schools, upper- and middle-class private high schools, and charter middle and high schools serving predominantly African American students. Together, these datasets capture the experiences of a diverse group of Black families across varied educational contexts.

Dataset 1: Black Parent Survey Project Findings

In “A Talk to Teachers,” James Baldwin (1963) describes education, and the education process of Black children in American schools, as a “paradox.” Shujaa (1994) further explores this idea, asserting that Black children experience an abundance of schooling, in the United States, but “too little

¹ Workshop co-facilitators were Lawrence T. Winn (Associate Professor and Executive Director of the Transformative Justice in Education Center at UC Davis), Maisha T. Winn (Professor, Graduate School of Education, Stanford), and Andre Anderson-Thompson and Carrissah Calvin (UC Davis graduate students).

education” in the process. Complementing the Getting Down to Facts research initiative, which aims to examine the current state of California’s pre-K-12 public education, here we zoom in on the experiences of Black families and how Black parents are navigating their children's educational journeys. The notion of “paradox” aligns with our findings, with what we learned from and with Black parents during focus group interviews.

Black parents underscored their values around education, emphasizing the critical need for educators who are qualified and well trained—but also deeply committed to the teaching profession and to loving Black children. Their visions of education balanced its role as a tool for economic mobility with its potential as a space to nurture their children's curiosities and passions. Finally, Black parents' reflections on their children’s educational trajectories revealed opportunities and challenges around combatting school oppression, strategizing through communication, and navigating through advocacy.

What Black Parents Value in Educators

Across focus groups, Black parents articulated clear and interconnected values they seek from educators. The data unveil that Black parents remain dedicated and committed to the education of their children, demanding that Black children and students’ lives matter. The expectation for educators and schools is highly-trained teachers who are engaged, unbiased, and loved by their students.

Central to Black parents’ expectations are educators who are qualified and committed to teaching as a profession. Many emphasized the importance of well-trained teachers who actively engage in ongoing professional development. One explained: “I believe that good educators are always pushing themselves to learn and grow and then therefore also pushing our scholars to learn and grow” (May 2021). This sentiment was echoed by another parent who expressed appreciation for “teachers that are willing to take the extra step not just stick to the basic curriculum...meeting them where they're at, you can't fail...that's what I really love. And I also love them to push [the] kids” (February 2021). For these parents, educator quality extends beyond the formal credential. They valued a commitment to continuous growth and willingness to go beyond minimum requirements to meet their students' needs.

Another throughline was the necessity of love. In addition to loving teaching, Black parents emphasized that educators must genuinely love Black children. One parent vividly illustrated this love in action: “So I admire when kids respect and love [teachers] so much that they would run out of my arms and run to their’s, right, that type of situation...just someone who really loves” (May 2021). While this powerful image encapsulates the trust Black parents desire to have with their children’s teachers, many parents made clear that loving Black children requires educators to examine and challenge their own and others’ internal biases and deficit-based assumptions. They must see Black students as capable, worthy, and full of potential. Parents urged educators to recognize the harm of anti-Black biases on Black children. One affirmed: “There is no deficit...in our children...they are capable and I will want [teachers] to be able to see them that way, that they can learn and they're worthy of learning and dignity and respect and all of that” (May 2021).

The love dynamics these Black parents stressed extend beyond individual relationships, encompassing love for teaching as craft and commitment to cultivating environments where Black children can thrive intellectually, creatively, and emotionally. These expectations are neither unreasonable nor paradoxical: they seek educational experiences of exceptional quality that confront the dangers and violence their children face with intellectual vigor, joy, and unwavering belief in their brilliance.

Black Parents’ Definitions and Expectations of Education

Black parents defined what education should provide for their children, revealing an expansive notion of education that honors the realities their children will navigate and also the full potential of who they can become. Black parents see education simultaneously as a “tool” preparing their children for opportunity and social mobility in a global economy, and as a space where children can discover passions and foster genuine intellectual curiosity. Parents articulated both dimensions of this vision through their own words and experiences.

Education as a “tool” emerged repeatedly during one focus group discussion. Black parents participants described education as a practical “tool” that equips children to navigate and succeed in the world, with one parent capturing this understanding: “Education is basically your way of learning

about the world and how you can fit into the world and how you can contribute and just basically being aware of how the world works...and learning the tools to be able to maneuver it successfully” (February 2021). Another parent reinforced this framing, stating: “I've always looked at education as a tool...it is a basic tool and you need it as a foundation for things that you're going to build on for the future” (February 2021).

Along similar lines, education was understood as preparation for participation in the global economy. One parent reflected: “I came from a working class family [so] education for me was about social mobility. I think I see education for my kids as being important to...participate in sort of a global economy. So I think that's how I see it, for myself as a kid and how I'd see it for my kids” (May 2021). In this framing, Black parents view education through a practical lens to prepare their children for life beyond schools.

Black parents were equally insistent that schooling should nurture intellectual growth, creativity, and personal discovery. One stated: “I feel like the purpose of education is to...allow for space for creativity and critical thinking and exploration and discovery” (May 2021). Another parent deepened this understanding, explaining that education should “respond to your intellectual curiosity to find things that you care deeply about to learn more about things that you...have some passion [for]” (May 2021). Acknowledging that they had seen this vision in practice, one parent praised their son’s former teacher:

My son had a fabulous teacher, two years ago she was actually from Sweden and, at the beginning of the year on the dry erase board she actually asked the kids, what do you guys want to learn for the year? And she actually took each of the kids 2,425 ideas and integrated it into her curriculum for the year. (February 2021)

What these parents describe aligns with what scholar Ruha Benjamin puts forth in *Imagination: A manifesto* (2024). Benjamin argues that “schools are places where the next generation either comes alive with possibility or is crushed by the weight of odds stacked against them. The very place where [students’] imaginations should be fostered is where that potential is routinely smothered” (p. 36). Black students in California remain underrepresented in honors and gifted programs; though they

comprise 5% of student enrollment, only 3% of Black students statewide were identified as "gifted or talented" in 2021 (Whitaker & Nelson, 2024). This pattern of underrepresentation extends to advanced placement courses and the International Baccalaureate program, as well (Whitaker & Nelson, 2024). It makes sense, then, that Black parents feel education must do more than prepare children for economic participation, honoring their intellect, curiosities, and passions—"gifted time and space to imagine differently" (Benjamin, 2024, p. 4).

Indeed, even as parents expressed hope for what education can provide, they articulated the need for caution in a system that has historically failed to protect Black children. As Baldwin (1963) opened his essay, "Let's begin by saying that we are living through a very dangerous time." And when has it *not* been "a very dangerous time" for families raising Black children? All the same, Black parents remained hopeful and positive in describing and explaining their definitions of education, and their expectations of educators and schools for their children.

Opportunities and Challenges: "School Survival Tactics"

Black Parent Survey Project data reveal that Black parents in Northern California experience their children's educational trajectories as deeply relational and shaped by their own persistent efforts to navigate/resist inequitable school structures. These efforts fell primarily into patterned "school survival tactics" for pushing back against institutional racism and creating alternative spaces of support and accountability within and beyond schools, revealing both opportunities and challenges.

Combatting School Oppression. Black parents frequently described needing to intervene in situations of unfairness or discrimination at their children's schools. Their narratives reveal schools as sites of persistent inequality, where administrators and teachers often hold decision-making power over students with limited input from families (Dumas, 2016). In one example, a mother of a high school student in Sacramento recalled stepping in during a school field trip after observing an adult's mistreatment of a student:

A young man was already in place in the line.... One of the school officials kept poking and poking and poking at him with rudeness and disrespect like he was trying to get this

kid riled up.... The kid got angry, and he told him “you're not going on the trip.” As a parent, I did speak to that school official, let him know...how detrimental that is to this young man's future. (May 2021)

This account illustrates how Black parents see their presence in school spaces as a form of protection against punitive and exclusionary practices. Her intervention highlights the necessity of parental advocacy in spaces where Black students are often denied fairness and empathy.

Other parents emphasized how structural carceral factors—such as police presence on campus—undermined Black children’s sense of safety. A mother of two elementary-aged daughters voiced concern: “You know, being at school is not a good place for them, we see what happens to our kids when officers are present. We need other resources.... If I can't trust police on the street, I am not trusting police to be anywhere near my kids, or any kids, for that matter” (May 2021).

Many parents situated carceral logics embedded in schools as threats to their children’s learning and development. These findings echo broader literature on the criminalization of Black students and call for more humanizing approaches to discipline (Allen et al., 2017; Radebe, 2021).

Strategizing Through Communication. In the face of systemic barriers, Black parents have developed sophisticated strategies to communicate with teachers and administrators. These strategies require significant emotional labor and persistence, as parents often encounter educators who fail to value their perspectives or understand their children’s needs.

Ms. Jackson, a parent of two children in private school, described frustration with a teacher who proposed behavior charts for all Black children in the class without first engaging families:

A teacher asked if my son needed to be put on a good discipline program.... I asked my son, who are the other kids in this class, he said “all the Black children.” I would have wanted a conversation, maybe from the beginning, about what the teacher is doing and what we at home could do to support them. (May 2021)

This story demonstrates how communication gaps between parents and educators can perpetuate deficit views of Black students, or at least leave them unchecked. This mother’s desire for collaborative dialogue reflects an insistence that communication be reciprocal, respectful, and rooted in shared accountability for students’ well-being.

Parents also expressed visionary ideas about how schools could redistribute resources toward holistic support. One proposed reinvesting disciplinary funds into basic needs and wellness services: “If we were thinking about other ways to use the money—absolutely, mental health professionals, social workers, meeting children’s basic needs...food, housing, shelter, medical care should absolutely be where we start and not necessarily in thinking about punishment” (May 2021). These narratives highlight how Black parents critique inequitable structures and also imagine new models of education centered on collaborative care and equity.

Navigating Through Advocacy. Finally, Black parents described constant navigation to advocate for their children. Advocacy was described as a form of emotional labor and strain that extends beyond typical parental engagement. One parent shared how she and her husband approach conversations with teachers about their daughter: “When we go in to sit down with teachers, we ask them, ‘Don’t start by telling us what he’s done wrong. Start by telling us what you see that is positive and where his strengths are.’ Because if you can’t give me any of his strengths, that tells me a lot about how you see our child” (May 2021). This experience and wisdom underscores how advocacy involves shifting educators’ perspectives and holding them accountable for deficit-based assumptions.

Parents also reported frustration when schools failed to respond to their advocacy in good faith. A parent of two middle schoolers shared the pain of feeling excluded after her child was denied re-enrollment in an after-school program: “Our kid ended up on the waiting list and was not selected to return.... They said it was random, but I don’t believe it. I think she was deemed a problem kid. They didn’t want to deal with her” (May 2021). Such experiences demonstrate that advocacy often Black places parents in conflict with institutions that perceive their assertiveness as disruptive, rather than collaborative. Still, Black parents in this study persist in efforts to ensure that their children are respected, supported, and given fair opportunities to learn.

The Black Survey Project data spurred us to explore a new pathway to engage with families. Rather than merely collecting interview data, our research team sought to curate spaces for families to imagine and build alternative futures for their children.

Dataset 2: Educational Futures of Black Children Pilot Workshop Findings

The Educational Futures of Black Children pilot workshop had three goals: (1) invite families to imagine education 10 years out, in a scenario of Black parents receiving a state salary to teach their children full-time, with revenue generated from reparations; (2) provide caregivers with activities and tools for imagining and planning for their children’s education; and (3) curate space for families to learn from and with each other about opportunities for their children to receive an affirming, impactful education.

Institute for the Future, a Palo Alto, California-based organization that provides foresight and design thinking training to organizations and corporate entities, collaborated with the research team to make features of their Foresight Essentials Training available to workshop participants. Our research team was struck by the tools’ usefulness—and everyday people’s lack of access to such tools. The workshop featured three tools from the foresight workshops:

1. **Flipping the Future:** Stakeholders discussed facts about the state of education for Black children in California using recent report and study data. For every fact that was negative, stakeholders crafted a statement to communicate the inverse.
2. **Preferred Futures:** Stakeholders had an opportunity to explore preferred futures for their children and for Black children in California.
3. **Scenarios from the Future:** Stakeholders engaged with research-team written scenarios imagining the future of education for Black children in California: Parents as Teachers, Students as Teachers, HBCU High School West, and Land as Teacher.

Here we focus on participant engagement around the scenario from the future entitled “Parents as Teachers” scenario (see Appendix A). In this scenario, our research team imagined that in 10 years

Black parents would have the option of being their children’s primary teachers through a program funded by reparations in the state of California that allows parents to teach their children and be compensated for their work as a full-time teacher. The research team crafted this scenario using signals of change such as preliminary findings from the [California Reparations Taskforce](#) and the [increase of African American homeschoolers](#) in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. The following transcript is from a smaller group conversation where we invited the caregivers to discuss the scenario in greater detail. It begins with one mother, Ramonda, who homeschooled her own children, imagining what it would be like if more Black caregivers had the resources to educate their own children; other participants responded with concern.

Mother Ramonda: We have to open access [to education] because parents who have to work, who have 2-3 jobs, they wish they could homeschool their children. During COVID that was a huge thing. We created little pods of parents like “Oh, you’re a stay home mom...so all the kids can come to your house while everyone has to work to make sure they are getting their learning.” I think if everyone [were] able to do it, they would do it. [Other parents affirm with head nods.] Can you imagine if you could really educate [your] children? Their little minds.... We think about our ancestors and the things they built and created. We need to stay on that path.

Grandmother Lola: My question is will everybody really win or will society find a way to criminalize our children, even if we are teaching them ourselves and they develop into this flower that we know they really are. Will society...find a way to criminalize them? There’s going to be something...more laws. Everything changes. [Other parents start talking and getting animated about this.]

Mother Brenda: Or will they get them for lack of formal education...

Mother Mimi: Because [home schools] are not by the book...they want them when the bell rings to walk in...

Mother Dorothy: Hands behind their back...

Mentor Tanya: Absolutely.

After Grandmother Lola referenced the criminalization of African American children in schools, caregivers began to complete each others' sentences to paint a picture of punitive schools focused more on managing student's bodies than providing opportunities to cultivate their minds. However, Mother Ramonda was not deterred by this conversation, though she was deeply empathetic. She underscored the importance of being diligent but also the tensions of encouraging African American children to be their best selves in the face of racism and adversity.

Mother Ramonda: We have to stay diligent on the back end, right, in our fights and the stuff we fight like “no school police,” “we need restorative practices,” like “Dude, stop being racist.” So I think we're still going to have to fight because, absolutely, we make perfect children, right? We prepare them. We tell them “Be good. Do this. Do that.” And anything can happen to them on any day.

Mother Ramonda certainly understood the concerns of fellow parents, and continued to return to the importance of remaining “diligent” on the “back end.” However, she self-contradicted when she flagged the concern that no matter what they did as parents and how “prepared” their children might be, they can still be subjected to harm and violence both symbolically and physically in their schools and communities. Having a moment to imagine this future scenario planted seeds for a conversation about the contemporary moment and the realities many Black children and their families face in schools. African American parents often feel policed themselves and believe that their efforts to support their children are often thwarted by the school system. African American parents also feel their children are policed in schools, with expectations around walking in straight lines and keeping their hands behind their backs mirroring jail and prison practices. Mother Ramonda understands that Black families are “still going to have to fight.”

We found this dialogue particularly compelling because it encompassed the optimism and dismay that parents, grandparents, and mentors had to hold simultaneously. While Mother Ramonda tried to keep the group uplifted and positive about the possibilities, she also acknowledged despite Black parents' best efforts—and their children's as well—that they would be subjected to undue scrutiny. Grandmother Lola's comments were anchored in lived experience as she was there with both her daughter and her grandson. She found the “Parents as Teachers” scenario to be too good to be true.

Scenarios and forecasts are not meant to be true; they are written using signals of change or data points that are small but can and will likely scale. Scenarios and forecasts should be provocative and point to a possible future. Grandmother Lola was not willing to exchange what she knew for what she thought could be a potentially bright future.

Graphic notetaking during the workshop shows some of the ideas this scenario generated (see Figure 1). Families talked about how important it would be to have opportunities for Black parents to be their own children’s teachers in a formal capacity, to counter the lack of Black teachers in the teacher education pipeline. Families also saw this scenario as a solid investment in education and a commitment to Black families throughout the state. One of the most important possibilities families saw with this scenario was that Black children would have the opportunity to flourish in ways they did not in school settings, because they would have teachers who had knowledge of their communities and were wholeheartedly invested in their success.

In the next section, we provide the overarching themes from both projects.

Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

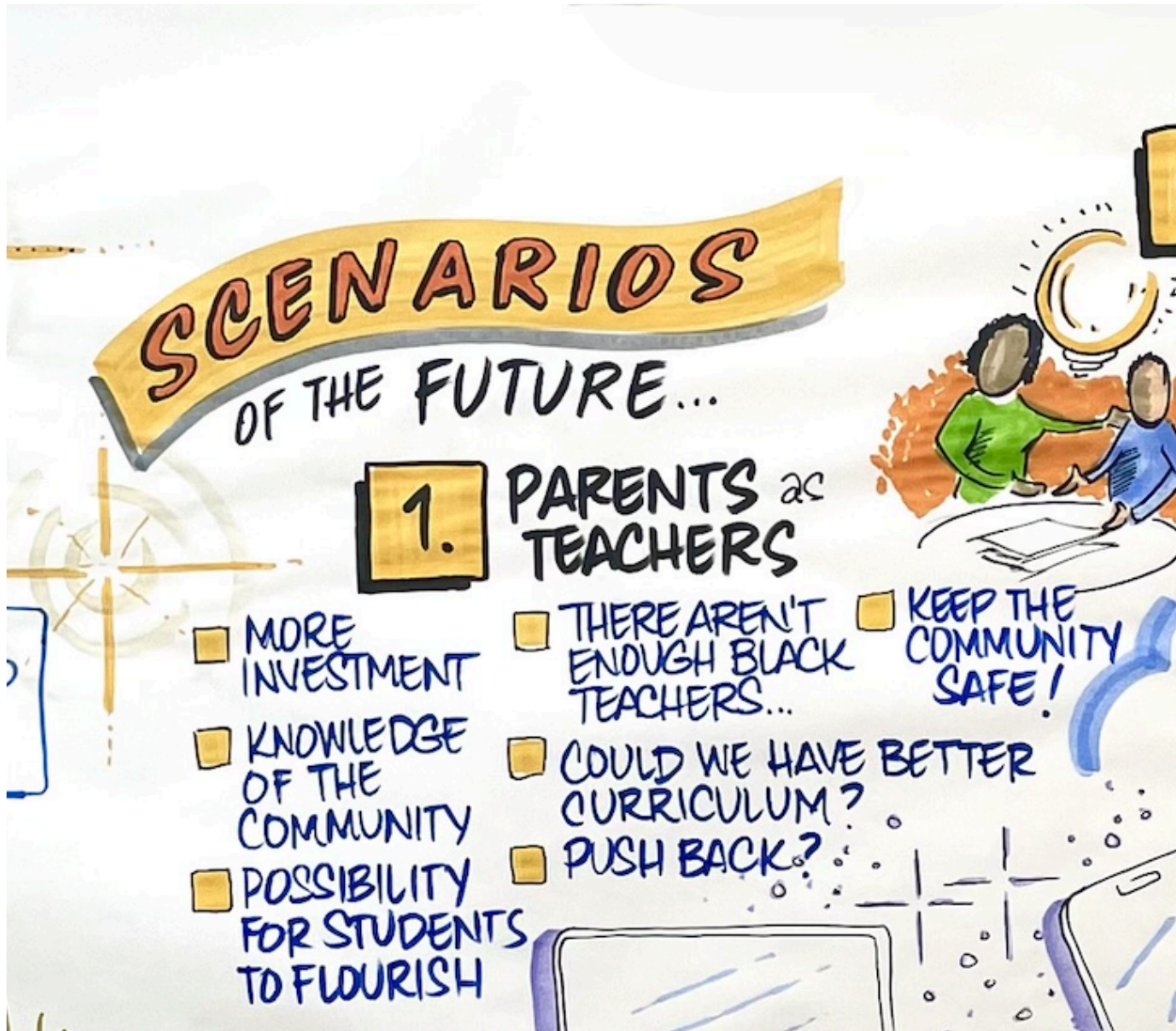
Implications: Patterns of Challenge and Opportunity

Challenge patterns faced by Black parents in this study are rooted in systemic inequities that shape Black children’s educational experiences. Parents encounter racial bias in disciplinary practices, insufficient and one-way communication with educators, and limited institutional accountability for harm. Many described needing to “always be on guard” to protect their children from being unfairly labeled and/or excluded—challenges compounded by schools’ reliance on carceral approaches that undermine trust and safety. At a personal level, advocacy takes an emotional toll. While Black parents described the fatigue of constantly having to intervene, strategize, and navigate barriers, they remain steadfast in their commitment to ensuring their children’s right to an affirming, quality education.

Our findings also reveal meaningful opportunities for transformation. Black parents are resisting inequities and modeling practices that could strengthen schools overall. Their approaches to communication, advocacy, and care offer a blueprint for building culturally-responsive,

community-based educational environments. Related opportunities emerge when schools recognize parents as partners, not competitors. Collaborative spaces that validate parents' knowledge can create more trusting relationships between families and educators.

Figure 1: Graphic notetaking output from the "Parents as Teachers" scenario



Recommendations for Policymakers, School Leaders, and Foundations

The experiences of these Black parents and their children are not new, nor is their call to action. Since the 1950s, African American families have resisted hostile schooling environments and advocated for educational spaces that are welcoming and culturally affirming. Historical movements such as Ocean Hill–Brownsville in New York, the African Free School in Newark, New Jersey, and Nairobi Day School in East Palo Alto, California illustrate how families have created their own rigorous, holistic, and community-centered learning spaces in response.

Building on this historical legacy, the findings from this study point to several key policy recommendations for elected officials, policymakers, school leaders, and foundations seeking to better support Black students and families.

1. **Leverage historical educational movements to inform current practice.** This report highlights the continued call from Black parents and their children for high-quality, affirming educational environments. For school leaders and educators seeking to better support Black families, this study offers an important research-based perspective. Those committed to responding to families' calls for engaged, unbiased, and caring educators should also engage with historical movements and scholarship, including *Futuring Black Lives: Independent Black Institutions and the Literary Imagination* (2025) and *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination* (2016). These works provide insight into how Black parents, teachers, and communities have worked collectively to transform educational opportunities for young people.
2. **Utilize policy reports as tools for learning, reflection, and informed action.** For California policymakers, it is also critical to engage reports such as *State of Black Education: California Report Card* (2024) and *Report & Recommendations for Improving Black and African American Student Outcomes* (2020), which outline ongoing challenges, opportunities, and community-driven recommendations/solutions.
3. **Build meaningful partnerships with community-based organizations.** Finally, elected officials and school leaders must build meaningful partnerships with community-based advocacy organizations, including the Sacramento Black Parallel School Board; Parents of African American Children in Contra Costa County; the African American Parent Advisory Council in San Francisco; Families in Action in Oakland; CADRE in South Los Angeles; the Black Parent Network in Los Angeles County; the Council of African American Parents (CAAP); Parents for Liberation; and BlackECE.

Conclusion

The experience patterns highlighted in this study of Black parents reveal the urgency of addressing systemic barriers *and* the transformative potential of partnership and advocacy. Black parents' experiences demonstrate that when schools center humanity, healing, and mutual respect, conditions are created for Black students to flourish.

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Appendix A: The “Parents as Teachers” Workshop Scenario



SCENARIO 1 Reimagining Black Parents as Teachers

by Lawrence Torry Winn

A quiet network of middle-class Black parents in the greater Bay Area, mostly tech workers, assembles something that would support a better education, a better future for their children. Something that isn't just a replication of 1960s dogma or passing fads in pedagogy.



SCENARIO 1

The parents have reason to worry. Most teachers simply do not understand Black children and their history, and just do not expect great things from them. The impacts of Long COVID have been devastating. Add to that the lingering political mess around “critical race theory,” and you have a moment in time that demands transformative action. If the teachers couldn't connect with Black children, the Black parents would have to do it.

The result, the Black Parents and Children Education Network (BPCEN), is ambitious, and includes significant political demands. It is, ultimately, a plan to create something entirely new, fully devoted to the uplifting of Black children.

BPCEN has three major parts. The first is the learning environment. Online, it goes beyond simple plans for more computers with the creation of “Humanizing Digital Learning Spaces” (HDLS), connecting Black parent-teachers and their students, working/learning with other families. In the physical world, it focuses on the construction of safe and empowering spaces called “Construct Learning Centers,” each accommodating up to 200 people.

The second major element of the BPCEN plan is financial, providing educational stipends for Black teacher-parents who choose to educate their children in HDLS and Learning Centers. The financial resources come, in part, from partnerships with local libraries, museums, universities, and tech companies.

On top of all this is the third element: an acknowledgment from the State of California that its public education system has participated in systemic racism and contributed to the harm and marginalization of Black students. This, in turn, enables a connection to California's Reparation Plan. By the mid 2030s, this will provide BPCEN with deep resources – eventually up to \$400 million per year.

This kind of funding ensures that BPCEN can support conventional teaching training and credentials for any teacher-parent, as well as a six-month parent-teacher academy, monthly workshops, and ongoing, cutting-edge training. The BPCEN framework directly supports the merging of the roles of parent and teacher.

By 2040, there will be a total of fifty Learning Centers, each with dozens of teacher-parents. The financial support can be used for property, equipment, technology, field trips, food, and meetings. The BPCEN sends the message that Black students matter, Black parents matter, and Black education matters in California. This is reflected in the program's motto, building on a quote from Micia Mosely: Every student needs a Black teacher. We have thousands.