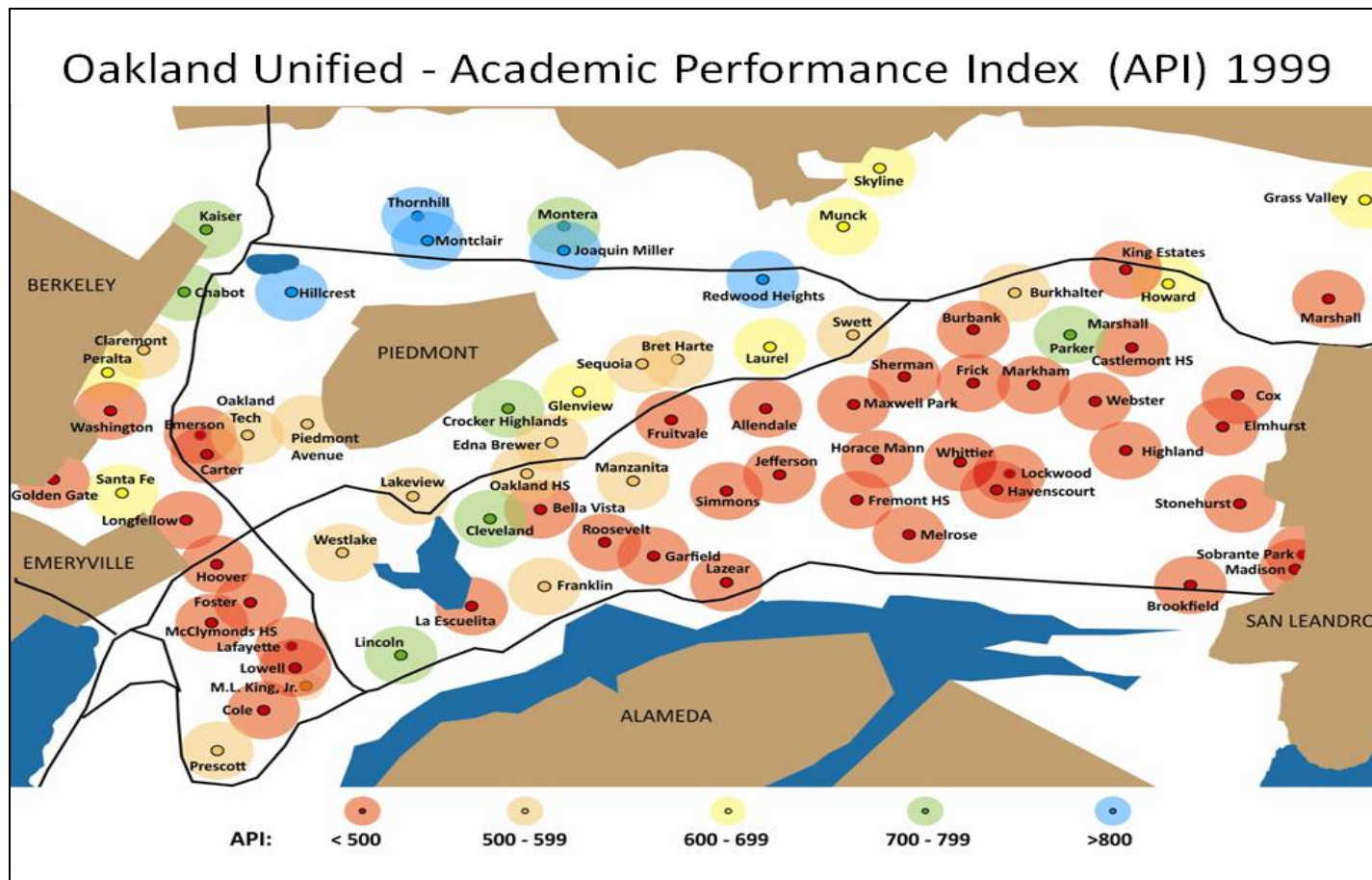


# Impact on Student Outcomes: *Oakland's New Small Autonomous Schools Movement*



## Mapping a District's Transformation

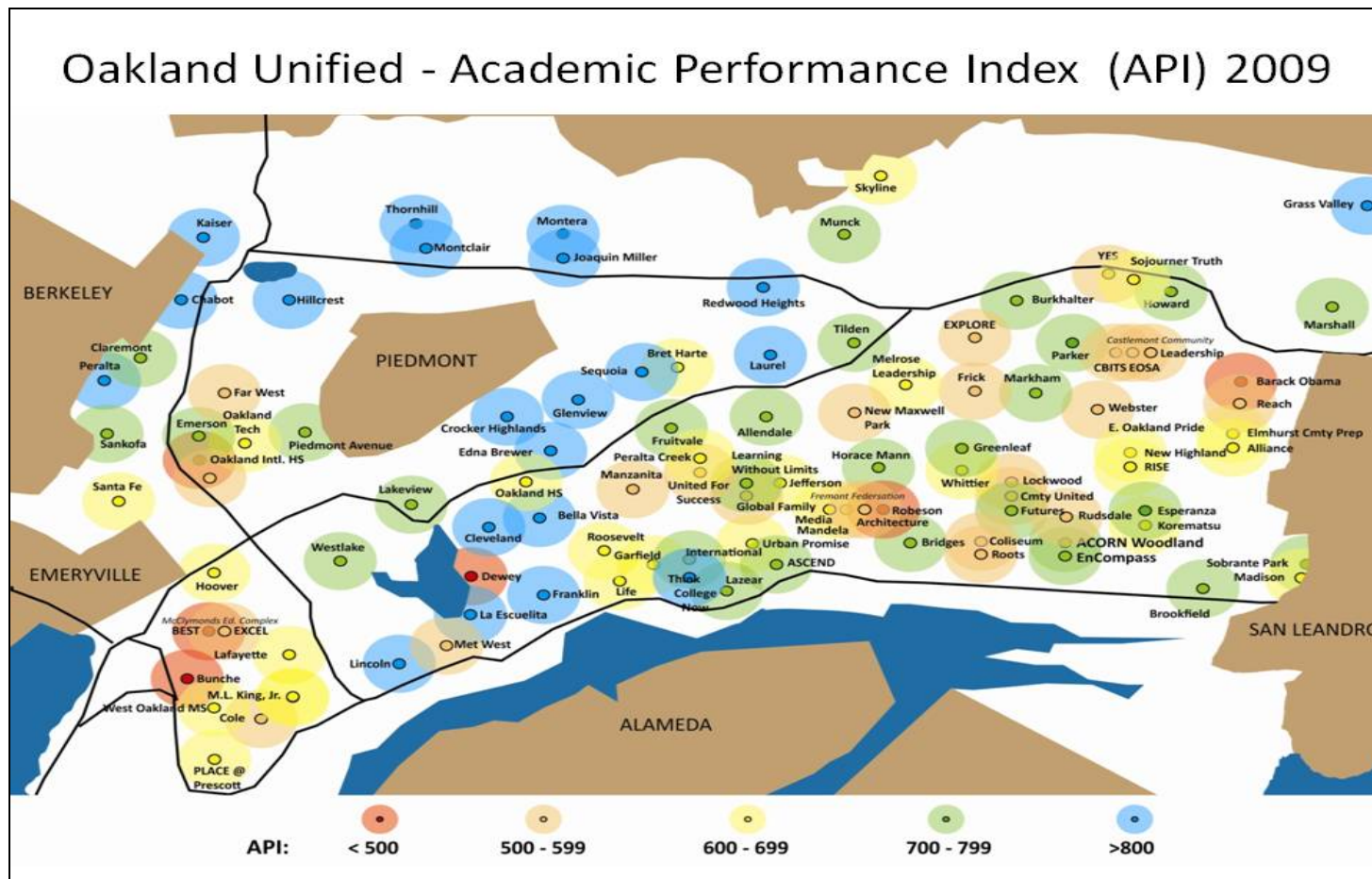
In 1999 in Oakland, California, students in the "flatlands," the impoverished neighborhoods of East and West Oakland where mostly African American and Latino families live, as opposed to the affluent, largely White and Asian American "hills," attended schools in deplorable conditions. The schools reflected decades of policy abandonment and disinvestment that had devastated neighborhoods. They were overcrowded with portables covering playgrounds. No new school had been built in 30 years. Students had very low literacy rates and very high dropout rates. At high schools in the most challenged neighborhoods, truant students roamed campuses and violence and open drug use were routine. Student, family, and staff morale was low. These conditions were reflected in the California state assessment, the **Academic Performance Index (API)**, which measures student literacy and math skills and is a key indicator of achievement gaps. In the following map, the flatlands from west to east are a sea of red - the lowest rating possible.



## Oakland's New Small Schools

The National Equity Project (then BayCES) and the Oakland Community Organizations (OCO) worked with the school district's central office to develop a district redesign strategy with small schools at the center. Project staff drafted the New Small Autonomous Schools Policy, which was passed by the school board in 2000. We coached school design teams comprised of educators and parents to create and launch small schools to replace over 25 flatlands schools with over 45 new "small by design" schools featuring a learning focus, a commitment to meeting the needs of every child, relationships with students and families, staff collaboration and continuous improvement.

The Project provided pass-through Gates Foundation grants, technical assistance, and principal and teacher coaching to 38 of these schools averaging four years of support per school. A decade later, the map shows a complete transformation, with many higher performing schools in the flatlands.



## Oakland's Rapid Academic Improvement is Led by Project Partners

In 2009, schools in Oakland Unified demonstrated some of California's fastest academic improvement. This year, 15 of 107 district schools improved API scores by 70 points or better, five times the statewide average of 14 points. Most of these schools (13/15 or 87%) are National Equity Project affiliates. **All recent BayCES partners (29 schools) made an average gain of 33 points, more than twice the state average.**

Out of 67 **elementary schools**, only **eight** posted API gains over 70 points:

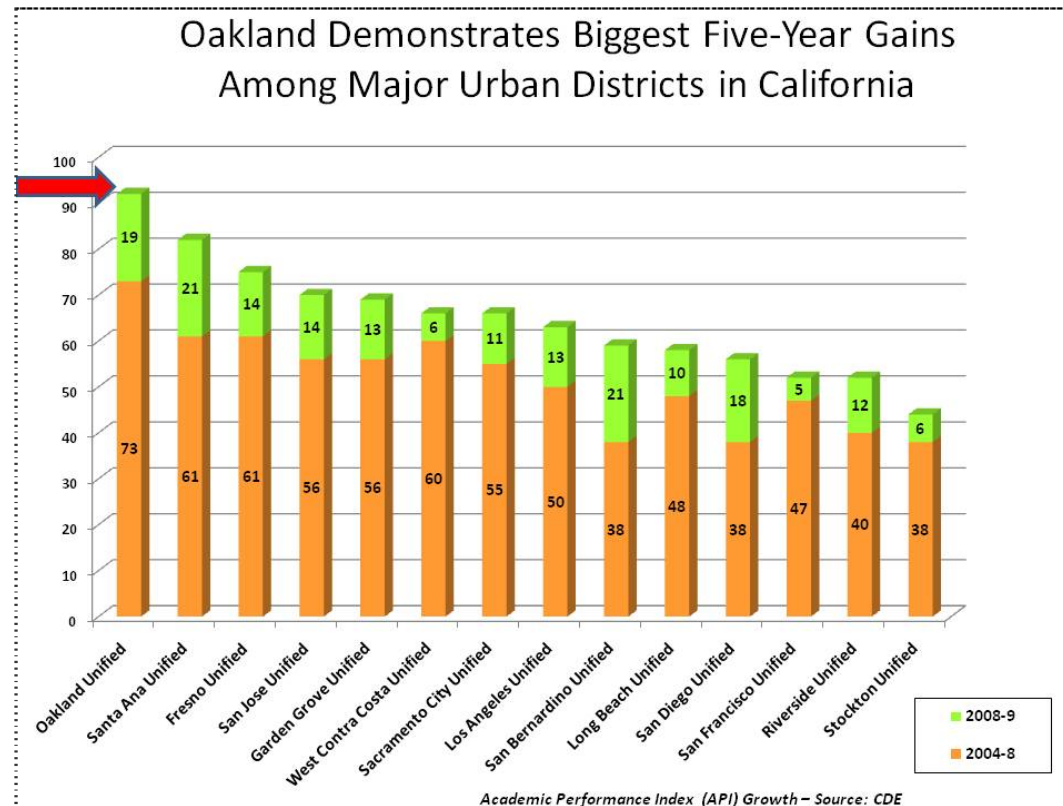
- Five are recent Project partners (Futures, Encompass, Manzanita SEED, Think College Now, and Learning Without Limits), and one is a recent new small school.

Out of 18 **middle schools**, only **three** posted API gains over 70 points:

- One was a Project partner in 2009 (Claremont), and two others are new small schools.

Out of 26 **high schools**, only **four** posted API gains over 70 points:

- Three worked intensively with Project in our 2009 Impact 2012 Initiative (Sojourner Truth, Media College Prep, and East Oakland School of the Arts). The other has worked closely with us from 2005-9 (Dewey Alternative).



## Outstanding New Schools Marked by Powerful Leaders and Communities

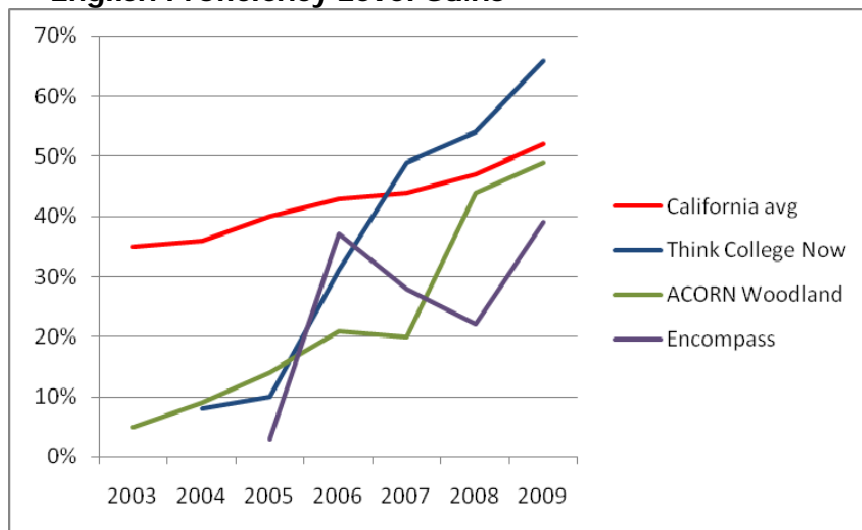
“This school would not exist if it were not for [the Project]. If someone tells me they want to start or redesign a school, I tell them they have to work with [the Project]. They helped us build a community that was the foundation of our academic success – they create the conditions for success.” **David Silver, Principal, Think College Now** (founded 2003)

“I don’t think we’d be where we are today without the ongoing support of [the Project]. They have been a completely committed and vital partner from the very beginning. [The Project] has helped us tackle incredibly challenging issues and my [Project] coach has helped me personally be a more transformative leader.” **Kimi Kean, Principal, Acorn Woodland Elementary** (founded 2000)

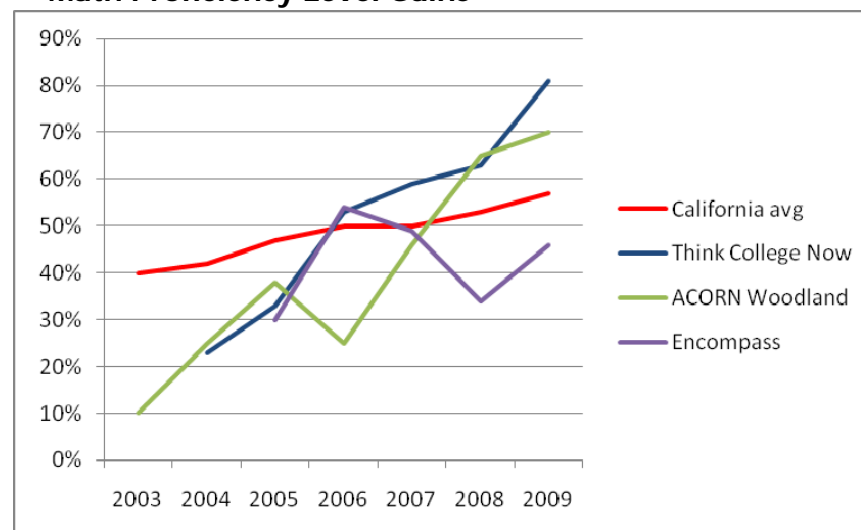
“[The Project] is the real deal. They have helped us develop teacher leadership teams, collaboration structures and processes to build trust, shared responsibility, and higher teacher buy-in. They bring a clear understanding of who we are and who we want to be.” **Minh-Tram Nguyen, Principal, Encompass Academy** (founded 2004)

## Closing the Gap: Three Early New Small Elementary Schools Make Stellar Gains

English Proficiency Level Gains



Math Proficiency Level Gains



*These three elementary schools serve a student population that is 95% African American or Latino, 88% low-income, and 55% English Language Learners.*

# National Equity Project Partner School Survey Data Shows Progress in School Community Culture and Practices

## School Climate and Relationships

- **More than four of five teachers (86%) in Project partner schools reported that “teachers in their school treat each other with respect.” This represented a dramatic 41 point increase.**
- Large majorities of students (71%), parents (83%), and teachers (87%) report that their school feels like “a caring and supportive environment.”
- More than four of five students (81%) agreed that “there is at least one adult at their school they can go to for good advice and support.
- More than nine in ten students (93%) report that their teacher expects them to do their best.
- Almost four of five parents (79%) reported that they collaborate with their child's teachers to help set and review his/her learning goals.

## Professional Learning Communities and Data-Driven Practice

- **As many as 83% of teachers agreed that they had observed a colleague or colleagues teach at least once in that year in Partner schools, a 40 point gain.**
- More than nine of ten teachers (92%) reported that they have a good understanding of the state standards for the grades or courses they teach.
- More than four of five teachers (85%) reported that their teaching has improved as a result of colleague collaboration.
- More than four of five teachers (81%) reported that they regularly use data on student performance to guide their teaching.

## Staff-Principal Relations

- **Seven of ten teachers (70%) in partner schools said they receive relevant and timely feedback about their work from their principal.**
- More than four of five teachers (82%) in partner schools reported that they are satisfied overall with their principal.

*Data source: Use Your Voice on-line survey administered by Oakland Unified School District. National Equity Project partner schools are 17 schools with which the Project had a coaching relationship in both 2007 and 2008.*